



Refugee resettlement
in developing countries

*The experience of Benin
and Burkina Faso, 1997 - 2003*

An independent evaluation

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Summary and recommendations

1. This report concerns the work of UNHCR, governments and implementing partners in two emerging resettlement countries, Benin and Burkina Faso where 226 African refugees were resettled between 1997 and 2001 under a Pilot Project financed by the Trust Fund for Enhancing Resettlement Activities. Under its terms of reference to evaluation team was requested to ascertain to what extent the Project has achieved its objectives of facilitating the integration of the refugees and to make recommendations concerning the design and implementation of this and other similar programmes.
2. The evaluation team had extensive consultations in UNHCR Headquarters and visited the two countries in August 2003. In order to assess the level of integration achieved by the resettled refugees and gain a first hand impression of their current living conditions the mission visited all those still resident in the two countries in their homes and interviewed them together with their family members. For purposes of comparison the team also made home visits to a number of refugee families who had come to the two countries of their own accord (henceforth called 'first asylum refugees'). Meetings were also held with UNHCR implementing partners, governmental counterparts as well as selected embassies and UN Offices.

Disappointing results of the pilot project

3. In the light of its findings the evaluation team came to the conclusion that the pilot project cannot be considered a success. The adverse economic circumstances of the two countries that rank among the poorest in the world are thereby principally to blame. It is symptomatic that 46% of the cases resettled to Burkina Faso and 32% of those resettled to Benin had left the country by the time the mission took place, allegedly because they found it impossible to make a living. For the remainder it turned out that the most important factor determining their livelihood was not whether they had found employment but whether they had contacts abroad which provided them with remittances or opportunities for trade. The second most important factor was the extent to which they were members of a larger community through which they could pool resources and assist each other.
4. The vital importance of foreign or community support is due to the scarcity of employment opportunities and the low local salaries which are often insufficient for the upkeep of a family and need to be supplemented by income from other sources. Refugee families benefiting from plural sources of income or community support were the only ones who appeared to be managing but they account for no more than 22% of the cases resettled. The remainder appear to live at or below the poverty line, with some cases entirely depended on remittances provided *inter alia* by other refugees resettled to Canada and the USA. A small number of cases (6%) without either employment or outside support were found to be entirely destitute.
5. It is to be noted that at the time the evaluation took place the resettled refugees' monthly subsistence allowances had been phased out for some time and they were only entitled to support in the health, education and employment generation sectors on the same terms as the other refugees hosted in the two countries. The resulting

social stratification among them appeared to parallel those of the first asylum refugees. A minority are managing to get by while the majority are living in various degrees of deprivation and poverty. Families with many young children appeared to be facing the greatest difficulty.

Adverse factors and circumstances

6. The performance of the Pilot Project suffered from a number weaknesses in the design and implementation of the project which are analysed in some detail in this evaluation. Chief among these are the lack of

- a feasibility study to determine the viability of the project
- criteria to select refugees for the project
- adequate briefing and orientation of the refugees prior departure
- adequate staffing and, in certain cases, training and know-how in the community services sector
- consistent and clear information on assistance entitlements
- sound management of the micro-credit sector
- involvement of the refugees themselves in running activities
- involvement of a wider range of potential partners in providing resources and support.

7. A crucial element in the short-comings listed above is the lack of experience, resources and initiative displayed by the government counterpart in both countries, notwithstanding the good will and commitment of individual members of its staff. Considering the extremely difficult overall situation and the widespread poverty in these countries it would not have been realistic to expect the governmental counterparts to give a higher degree of priority to the programme or to perform significantly better. They certainly do not have the capacity to set up an integration programme which meets the standards outlined in the recent *International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*.

8. In these circumstances a strong UNHCR field presence would have been all the more important. Perhaps largely because of the UNHCR funding crisis, however, this was not forthcoming. The UNHCR Office in Burkina Faso was closed in 2002 and the Office in Benin has clearly not had staff of sufficient number and expertise to monitor its programmes effectively and take timely corrective action. As a result, the local micro-credit programme was implemented for years without regard to UNHCR guidelines on the topic, and UNHCR funds were used to establish a parallel health care programme for refugees which was described as 'fairly catastrophic' in a recent expert report¹ and the consequences of which were witnessed by the evaluation team. Equally serious are the weaknesses in the community services sector which

¹ See Dr, Marie-Claude Bottineau, Rapport de Mission en République de Bénin (20-30/8/20003), p.6

confirm observations and criticisms made in a number of previous evaluations, notably the recent evaluation of the community services function².

UNHCR's continuing responsibility

9. It has at times been remarked that the integration difficulties experienced by the refugees resettled in Burkina Faso and Benin are due to a lack of serious effort on their part. It is thereby pointed out that they received a substantially higher level of assistance than the first asylum refugees but failed to put the funds to fruitful use. The evaluation team did indeed find that the refugees were, with very few exceptions, greatly disappointed by the reality they encountered in their countries of resettlement, saw no future for themselves there and were consequently not motivated to establish themselves permanently. This does not, however, mean that they can be made principally responsible for the failure of the Pilot Project. Rather, the poor performance of the Project and the disaffection of the refugees must be attributed to the same set of causes: the unfavourable economic environment in the countries concerned, combined with the weaknesses inherent in the design and implementation of the project itself.

10. What is at issue here is the whole question of establishing resettlement programmes in impoverished nations such as Benin and Burkina Faso. The evaluation has shown that a fundamental difference exists between resettlement to countries which rank at the top of the Human Development Index and those which rank at the bottom, a difference starkly illustrated by the difference in life expectancy between the two sets of countries which amounts to almost 30 years (80 versus 50). The former have well tried systems and resources to facilitate the integration of newcomers and provide opportunities of employment, adequate sanitation, housing and health care, as well as a functioning education system and a social safety net. **Not one** of these is readily available in the latter, and the detrimental consequences were all too evident during many of the home visits conducted as part of this evaluation. In the circumstances it cannot come as a surprise that many refugees feel betrayed by this programme and see themselves as guinea pigs in a failed experiment which now faces them with a life of dire poverty devoid of any prospect for improvement.

11. There can be no doubt that two groups of refugees in particular have been seriously and durably disadvantaged by this project: those who could have been resettled to traditional countries of resettlement, and those who would most likely not have been resettled to Benin and Burkina Faso had proper selection criteria been available. In the opinion of this evaluation, UNHCR should not divest itself of responsibility for the situation of these people which has been occasioned by policies it has adopted. In the absence of a contingency plan to cater for the possible failure of the Pilot Project, this evaluation recommends a number of measures which should be taken to provide a degree of ongoing support to the vulnerable cases and secure the long-term education and training prospects of the children involved. The possibility of resettling those refugees falling under criteria 4.9 (lack of local integration prospects) should also be examined on a case by case basis.

² CASA Consulting, The Community Services Function in UNHCR - An Independent Evaluation, Geneva, 2003.

Resettlement to developing countries: a viable prospect?

12. Despite the problems encountered, this evaluation has shown that countries such as Burkina Faso and Benin which are politically stable, respect the terms of the 1951 Convention and have a generous asylum policy can have a role to play in the context of refugee resettlement. They can certainly provide a temporary safe haven for cases who need to leave their countries of first asylum for protection reasons and may, indeed, provide a durable solution for certain cases who cannot or do not wish to be resettled in developed countries.³ A minority of those currently resettled in Burkina Faso and Benin – some 10% in all – fall into the latter category and are likely to remain where they are for the foreseeable future. Judging by the experience of the Pilot Project, however, the establishment of a credible resettlement programme in a poor developing country requires a degree of planning and a level of commitment in staffing and resources which goes much beyond that made available so far.

13. In the opinion of this evaluation, resettlement programmes to developing countries should only be introduced if the following conditions can be met:

- the resettlement programme must be used as a strategic tool to enhance the integration prospects of ALL refugees in the country concerned; rather than being excluded from the integration programme as was the case in Benin and Burkina Faso, first asylum refugees should be able to benefit from it in equal measure;
- the comprehensive integration programme to be put in place should be funded by the donor community as a burden sharing measure in recognition of the country's generous asylum policy and its readiness to accept resettled refugees; as such the programme could be subject to the type of multi-lateral special agreement envisaged under the 'Convention Plus' approach;
- the integration programme should be supplied with a strong, long-term development component of the kind outlined in the High Commissioner's recent DLI (Development through Local Integration) initiative.

14. The evaluation concludes by proposing and discussing a number of recommendations to put such a programme into effect. It is clear that these require a considerable input of time and effort and may come to full fruition only in the longer term. The serious problems faced by both resettled and first asylum refugees in Benin and Burkina Faso require, however, that action should be taken as of now to try and secure additional resources and partnerships for their benefit. Judging by exploratory contacts made during the mission, the evaluation team found that donors are in principle well-disposed to the idea of providing enhanced support to the two countries in the light of their positive asylum policy and their willingness to accommodate resettled refugees. There are also a considerable number of locally based NGO partners in the aid and development community in the two countries which may be successfully approached.

³ An example are cases involving polygamous marriages some of whom were resettled under the Pilot Project.

15. The UNHCR Regional Office in Benin has recently made significant strides in the development of such new partnerships⁴ and is in the process of attempting to identify and remedy the weaknesses of the current programme. To succeed in this enterprise, however, it is abundantly clear that the Office is in need of additional staff and resources. In the light of the above this evaluation recommends a series of measures to ease the plight faced by both resettled and first asylum refugees in the immediate term and establish a solidly based and better resourced programme in the longer term. Unless such resources are made available and a solid planning process can be instituted, resettlement to Benin and Burkina Faso and, indeed, to developing countries altogether, should only be attempted in the rare cases where this is clearly the only available, or the only appropriate solution.

Recommendations to be undertaken in the immediate term

(i) Considering UNHCR's continuing responsibility for the welfare of the refugees resettled under its auspices in Benin and Burkina Faso the following measures should be undertaken by the Office and, if possible, extended to all refugees hosted in the two countries:

- The children of destitute families should be provided with a monthly education grant, a measure of particular importance for families with many children; in addition, all school children should be provided with school books in addition to school uniforms and registration costs which are covered at present (US\$ 21,000 per annum for a total of 80 children of resettled refugees in both countries).
- Scholarships for resettled refugees who have not completed their studies should be reinstated at the full level until they have graduated.
- Elderly, sick, women heads of household, or otherwise unemployable refugees should be provided with a minimal level of monthly assistance to cater for their basic needs (US\$5,000 per annum for 10 persons).
- UNHCR and the local authorities should jointly devise a strategy to enhance the employment prospect of qualified resettled and first asylum refugees; this should include a special appeal to UNDP Offices concerned so as to promote the employment of qualified refugees as UNVs.
- Children of resettled refugees in Benin and Burkina Faso should be deemed eligible for DAFI scholarships on the same terms as other refugees and be kept informed of this opportunity.

Action: West Africa Desk, Resettlement Section, RO Benin

(ii) A case by case review of the resettled refugees should be undertaken to determine who may qualify for secondary resettlement under criterion 4.9 of the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (refugees without local integration prospects for whom voluntary repatriation will not become an option in the foreseeable future).

⁴ Promising new partnerships in the health sector were recently established with *Terre des Hommes* and *Racines*.

Action: Resettlement Section, RO Benin

(iii) Taking account of the improved repatriation prospects in the Great Lakes Region, UNHCR should actively consider employing qualified refugees from the region who are currently in Benin and Burkina Faso to assist it in implementing these operations.

Action: Desk for Central Africa and Great Lakes Region

(iv) The Community Services Function in the UNHCR Regional Office in Benin should be strengthened through

- the urgent training of existing local UNHCR and implementing partners' staff, and their familiarisation with relevant UNHCR standards and policies, (including programme, reporting and basic budget training).
- the urgent identification and training of three refugee community workers and their employment by the implementing partner in both Benin and Burkina Faso under a newly created budget line.
- the deployment of an international Community Services Officer to supervise and monitor all activities in this sector.

Action: West Africa Desk, Health and Community Development Section, RO Benin.

(v) Refugee resettlement to Benin and Burkina Faso should not be resumed until a comprehensive integration programme as outlined in recommendations 8-12 can be introduced; until such time only cases for whom there is no other solution should be moved to these countries for purpose of temporary protection.

Action: Resettlement Section

Recommendations to be undertaken in the longer term with respect to setting up resettlement programmes in developing countries.

(vi) Clear criteria should be established to select developing countries suitable for emerging resettlement whereby equal weight should be given to legal protection and socio-economic factors; the latter should take account of the principles established in the International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration.

Action: UNHCR (Resettlement Section)

(vii) Resettlement to developing countries should be only be undertaken if it can be used strategically by attracting additional donor support in order to enhance the integration prospects of ALL refugees in the country concerned.

Action: UNHCR

(viii) Since resettlement to developing countries is primarily an integration challenge assistance programmes to this end should be designed within the framework of UNHCR's DLI (Development through Local Integration) initiative, incorporated where possible into Convention Plus agreements, and planned as well as monitored by administrative units professionally concerned with integration programmes; for this purpose the DLI approach should be made applicable also to urban refugees.

Action: UNHCR

(ix) Resettlement programmes to developing countries must be based upon a detailed feasibility study which should aim to examine integration prospects, establish appropriate selection criteria for refugees as well as draw up relevant information and orientation materials for refugees and UNHCR staff involved in the resettlement process; refugees must be fully and accurately informed of conditions and declare themselves ready to proceed on that basis.

Action: UNHCR

(x) In order to facilitate access to development funding, resettlement/integration programmes in the countries concerned should be incorporated into Poverty Reduction Strategies and designed to attract bilateral funding in the longer term; donors should be encouraged to provide additional input into designated segments of the strategy to compensate for governmental measures aimed at facilitating the socio-economic integration of refugees, particularly in the employment sector.

Action: Host government, UNHCR and donors.

(xi) Resettlement / integration programmes with a development component must be primarily negotiated in the field, require a long-term, multi-year planning horizon and active governmental support; a strong and continuous UNHCR field presence is indispensable if this process is to maintain momentum and succeed; UNHCR staff involved should be given training so as to become familiar with the working practices of key actors in the development field.

Action: Host Government, UNHCR and donors.

- (xii) The programme must be put on strong institutional foundations through
- the establishment of a multi-year monitoring and evaluation procedure involving all key actors;
 - regular consultations with interested NGO and civil society partners;
 - secondment of experts from other countries with similar experience (South-South model).

Action: Host government, UNHCR, NGOs and donors.

(xiii) Refugees should be directly involved and employed in the planning and implementation of the project.

Action: Host government, UNHCR and NGOs.

(xiv) The community services sector plays a key role in facilitating the integration of refugees; implementing partners in this sector therefore need to be adequately staffed, well trained and professionally supervised.

Action: UNHCR (in particular Health and Community Development Section) and Host government.

(xv) The needs-based protection planning and capacity building project recently submitted for funding to the European Union should be utilised to design a comprehensive DLI programme for urban refugees in Benin and Burkina Faso along the lines proposed in recommendations vi - xiv above.

Action: UNHCR (Department of International Protection, West Africa Desk)

Introduction

16. The focus of this report is, by normal evaluation standards, an unusually small programme. It principally concerns the situation of 226 African refugees who were resettled to Burkina Faso and Benin in the years 1997-2001 under a UNHCR Pilot Project financed by the Trust Fund for Enhancing Resettlement Activities. Despite its limited scope, however, the programme has proved to be an experience of considerable significance. Indeed, the obstacles and difficulties encountered in the process of its implementation give a valuable insight into the issues at stake in attaining one of the global objectives laid down in the UNHCR Agenda for Protection, namely

‘to work to enhance protection through an expanded use of the number of countries engaged in resettlement, as well as through more strategic use of resettlement for the benefit of as many refugees as possible, taking, however, account of the resource implication thereof’ (Goal 5, objective 5).

17. The evaluation of the Pilot Project provided the opportunity to discuss these issues in considerable detail with a range of UNHCR staff members both at Headquarters and in the field, as well as with governmental and NGO implementing partners, donor representatives and UN agencies. These discussions have shown that resettling refugees to developing countries requires an approach which differs fundamentally from that normally adopted for traditional resettlement countries and requires long-term planning, specific expertise and assistance of a developmental nature. The report contains a number of findings and recommendations to this effect.

Previous evaluations

18. While the present report is the first evaluation of the Pilot Project undertaken under the auspices of the UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit it has been evaluated also in several previous reports. Reference to these will help to explain the evaluation criteria adopted in this report and the manner in which they differ from the others. Three previous reports should be singled out in particular since they mark important stages in the evolution of the Project and allow an insight into the way it was assessed and managed. The first is a brief but very useful document produced in 2000 by the UNHCR Resettlement Section, which sums up the status of the Project after the first two years of its operation and aims to chart the way ahead.⁵ Secondly, there is the evaluation of the Trust Fund for Enhancing Resettlement activities undertaken in 2001 by a member of the Danish Immigration Department which also covers the Benin/Burkina Faso Pilot Project.⁶ Lastly, there is the most recent evaluation conducted by the Resettlement Section in June 2002 which recommends

⁵ *Summary Status of Resettlement Projects in Benin and Burkina Faso*, Geneva, 30 June 2000.

⁶ J.Kofod, *Evaluation of UNHCR's Fund for Enhancing Resettlement Activities*, Geneva, 2001.

that resettlement into Benin and Burkina Faso should be continued subject to certain conditions.⁷

19. The Summary Status document issued in 2000 contains a succinct assessment of the short-comings suffered by the Project in its initial phase. Chief among these are 'the lack of a systematic pre-arrival orientation programme' for the refugees and 'the lack of a clear and comprehensive strategy' on how best to facilitate their integration and self-sufficiency. The report calls for such a strategy to be drawn up on the part of the authorities and recommends a number of additional steps to improve programme delivery, including

- the production of new written resources on resettlement in the two countries
- increased association of NGOs and other local partners
- an appropriate training programme
- the establishment of standards to measure the success of the Project

20. The report acknowledges that the involvement of external expertise may be required and recommends the deployment of resettlement and integration specialists from traditional resettlement countries in order for them to share their experience with the local authorities and implementing partners. As a result, two Canadian integration consultants were posted to Benin and Burkina Faso in the course of 2000 and 2001. Both of them produced highly informative mission reports⁸ containing a number of useful recommendations some of which parallel the recommendations of the Summary Status document (improved training, greater association of other partners, establishment of a strategic plan, etc.). The presence of the consultants, while clearly beneficial to the refugees, appears, however, to have had a very limited effect in motivating the authorities to put the programme on a stronger footing. None of the steps cited above appear to have been implemented. Both reports, moreover, express doubts about the long-term viability of the Project and give voice to concern about what might happen to the refugees, in particular those in vulnerable condition, once their assistance is terminated.⁹

21. The second report is the evaluation of the Trust Fund for Resettlement undertaken by the Danish Immigration Department. It extensively relates the dissatisfaction with their new country of residence expressed by the resettled refugees not only in Benin and Burkina Faso, but also in the other emerging resettlement destinations, such as Chile and Brazil. The reason for their complaints is, however, not examined in further detail. Instead, the author points out that the refugees had found protection in their resettlement countries and that their attitude resulted from 'disappointment at what they perceived to be a lack of possibility to

⁷ *Mid-term Evaluation Report: Mission to Benin and Burkina Faso, 27 May – 1 June 2002*, Geneva, 10 June 2002.

⁸ S. Moreau, *La réinstallation et l'intégration des réfugiés au Bénin et au Burkina Faso, rapport d'activités et de recommandations suite au déploiement du 8 août au 22 décembre 2000* (March 2001); H. Flamand, *La réinstallation et l'intégration des réfugiés au Burkina Faso, rapport de suivi* (November 2001); Ms. Flamand was also posted briefly in Benin but left the country after receiving threats over a case of suspected embezzlement involving a staff-member of the local implementing partner CARITAS. The staff-member has since left.

⁹ See the concluding pages of both reports.

improve their social standing.¹⁰ In the author's view the latter does not diminish the value of the Pilot Project which he considers to have been successfully implemented in the countries concerned.

22. The criteria for success thereby adopted by the report appear to be the refugees' attainment of safety from persecution at minimum cost. The report concludes that the Resettlement Section and UNHCR field offices are to be commended, for having demonstrated the 'possibility of protecting and resettling a larger group of refugees for an equal amount of money spent on resettlement in the traditional resettlement countries', whereby the author calculated the figure of \$4,880 per capita in the case of the Pilot Project which appears to be considerably less than the average cost of resettlement in developed countries. By the time the report appeared, UNHCR had, however, temporarily suspended resettlement to both Benin and Burkina Faso on account of a number of difficulties which are to be examined in greater detail below.

23. The Resettlement Section's Mid-Term Evaluation Report of June 2002 also adopts a basically positive attitude towards the project. It notes that Governmental counterparts had expressed 'overall satisfaction with the project' and states that refugees who complained about the lack of employment perspectives should, after often more than two years' assistance, be expected to shoulder the burden 'by themselves'. Resettlement should therefore be resumed in a full-fledged manner as of January 2003, pending the establishment of a detailed Plan of Action by the authorities as well as a better selection mechanism for refugees to be resettled. The report also includes the outline of an assistance package for the new programme. Resettlement was not, however, resumed as planned in 2003. The Government of Burkina Faso failed to submit a Plan of Action and, by the time the Government of Benin had submitted theirs, the Resettlement Section had decided to request an independent evaluation of the project before engaging itself further. This was prompted by a debate within UNHCR concerning the future direction of resettlement activities in the two countries.

Present evaluation criteria

24. What the reports cited above have in common is that they all mention, to a greater or lesser extent, the dissatisfaction expressed by some of the resettled refugees. They do not, however, attempt to verify to what extent these complaints might be justified by examining the actual living conditions of the refugees in their new countries of residence or the degree to which the socio-economic circumstances in these countries make their integration a viable prospect. Instead, the reports are principally concerned with operational and budgetary matters.

25. The criteria adopted by the present report are based upon UNHCR's evaluation policy which states that 'the primary concern of all evaluations is the impact of UNHCR's work on the rights and welfare of refugees.'¹¹ The mention of rights and welfare is indicative of the fact that the acquisition of a durable solution such as resettlement involves more than just safety from persecution, however

¹⁰ J.Kofod, op.cit., p.56.

¹¹ UNHCR's Evaluation Policy, September 2002, p.4.

fundamental that may be in itself. This has been recognised by the UNHCR Agenda for Protection which calls on states

‘to ensure that resettlement runs in tandem with a more vigorous integration policy, aimed at enabling refugees ... to enjoy equality of rights and opportunities in the social, economic and cultural life of the country’ (Goal 5, objective 5).

26. The evaluation of a resettlement programme must therefore attempt to ascertain how effective that integration policy has been and to what extent it has enabled refugees to enjoy equality of rights and, that being the case, access to opportunities, particularly those needed in order to make a living and become truly self-reliant. In order to best assess this in the limited time available, the evaluation team decided not only to meet with the resettled refugees but to visit all of them in their homes, interview them together with the members of their families and obtain a first hand impression of their living conditions. In addition a selected number of refugees who had come to Benin and Burkina Faso as first countries of asylum were also visited in their homes so as to compare their situation to that of the resettled group. These interviews yielded a complex and rather diversified picture. Generally speaking, however, the findings indicate that, while the refugees’ rights are indeed respected in their countries of resettlement, access to opportunities enabling them to secure a basic level of welfare and self-reliance has been obtained only by a few. As discussed in detail below, only 22% of the refugees resettled to the two countries can be said to be economically integrated; 36% remain in difficulty and 38 % have left, allegedly because they were unable to make a living.

27. The reasons for this disappointing result are numerous, and the first part of this report aims to examine the various factors involved. This is followed by an analysis of the current situation of the resettled refugees which concludes with recommendations aimed at easing the plight of both resettled and first asylum refugees who cannot be considered self-reliant or integrated. The final section seeks to draw together the lessons that may be learnt from this experience with respect to initiating resettlement programmes in developing countries; particular attention is given to the question how such programmes might be used strategically and what the resource implications are likely to be.

The resettlement pilot project: adverse factors and circumstances

Background and basic facts

28. The Pilot Project has its origins in a request by member states of the Working Group on Resettlement, in particular the Nordic countries, for UNHCR to diversify resettlement opportunities for refugees. To this effect, a Trust Fund for Enhancing Resettlement Activities was established on 16 January 1997 with the principal purpose of financing the establishment of pilot projects in what came to be known as 'emerging resettlement countries'. The rationale behind this initiative was to increase the number of resettlement places available to refugees and to ease the burden on traditional resettlement countries. In addition, it was felt that individuals 'could often benefit by being offered resettlement in a country where the local population is ethnically, religiously and/or culturally more similar to that of the refugees'.¹²

29. As a result, negotiations were initiated which led to the conclusion of agreements with six new resettlement countries: Chile, Brazil, Ireland and Iceland, as well as Benin and Burkina Faso. The latter turned out to be among the very few African countries¹³ which fulfilled the necessary criteria in that they

- were not refugee producing,
- had signed and implemented the international legal instruments concerning refugees,
- had a UNHCR presence in-country
- appeared to offer some local integration prospects.

30. The authorities in both countries were willing to cooperate with this initiative, partly as an expression of solidarity with the plight of African refugees and partly because they expected to obtain a degree of support on the part of UNHCR and the donor community in exchange for their readiness to share the burden of forced displacement.

31. Burkina Faso was the first of the two countries to agree officially to the establishment of the Pilot Project. In 1997 the inter-ministerial Selection Committee responsible for refugee status determination was given the task of processing resettlement applications submitted by UNHCR. The Committee includes representatives from the *Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés* (CONAREF) which assumed responsibility for reception and integration assistance of the resettled

¹² Kofod, J., Evaluation of UNHCR's Fund for Enhancing Resettlement Activities, p.6.

¹³ As a result of the initiative of the Regional Office in Pretoria, 16 refugees were resettled in South Africa in 1998 with expenses charged against the Trust Fund; the experiment was not successful (for details see Kofod, op.cit., p.28-9). Other African countries considered for resettlement at the time were Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Senegal.

refugees. The micro-credit sector was first assigned to the *Réseau des Caisses Populaires du Burkina*, then to the NGO CREDO. Both resettled and first asylum refugees are permitted to reside and work in the country, but access to employment in the public sector is highly restricted and the acquisition of nationality is subject to a ten-year residence period. Between 1997 and 2000, a total number of 73 cases / 25 persons from various African countries were given leave to resettle in Burkina Faso.¹⁴

32. The Government of Benin adopted the Resettlement Pilot Project in August 1998 and decreed the establishment of a Selection Committee including representatives from various ministries, as well as the *Commission Nationale Chargée des Réfugiés* (CNAR). The Committee examined cases presented by UNHCR and also undertook selection missions to Chad (1999) and Tanzania (2000). In total, 153 persons / 36 cases were resettled to Benin between 1997 and 2001.¹⁵ Like first asylum refugees, the resettled refugees have access to documentation, are allowed to reside and work in the country and have the right to acquire Beninese nationality after a period of three years' residence. Like in Burkina Faso, access to employment in the public sector is *de facto* virtually impossible to obtain. The integration programme for the resettled refugees was jointly implemented by CNAR and CARITAS whereby the former dealt primarily with legal, advocacy and health care matters and the latter with material assistance.

Lack of a feasibility study

33. While Burkina Faso and Benin have a positive record as refugee receiving countries, they are also among the least developed in the world. In the Human Development Index of 1998 Benin ranked in position 145 with a life expectancy of 54.4 years, while Burkina Faso figured third from the bottom with position 172 and a life expectancy of 46.3 years. By comparison, all traditional resettlement countries rank among the top 20 and offer a life expectancy of 75 to 79 years.¹⁶ These figures are enough to indicate that the expectations habitually aroused among refugees by the term 'resettlement', namely the hope not only for security but also for a better life for them and their children, were not likely to be fulfilled in these countries.

34. Economic trends in both countries have, moreover, not been particularly favourable. In Benin, monetary poverty in urban areas fell from some 28.5% to 23.3% in the period 1997-2000. Non-monetary poverty, however, measured in terms of child mortality and access to sanitation and health care, increased from 43.4% to 49%. This increase is indicative of the fact that the country's current economic growth of 5.2% is insufficient. Considering its high birth rate, it needs a growth rate of at least 7%. to make a significant impact on poverty reduction. A serious lack of investor confidence and a dependence on the export of cotton (81% of the total), a commodity whose world market price has recently been in decline, do not augur well for the future economic performance of the country.¹⁷ While there are no official figures it is common knowledge that the unemployment rate is high, and a large number of Beninois, particularly the more educated, have migrated abroad.

¹⁴ See Annex C.

¹⁵ See Annex C.

¹⁶ The ten traditional resettlement countries are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

¹⁷ Figures derived from *Document de stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté au Bénin 2003-2005*, 8-13.

35. In Burkina Faso, the situation is rather worse, with some 45.3% of the population living below the poverty line. Literacy levels remain among the lowest, child and maternal mortality levels among the highest worldwide. While poverty is principally concentrated in rural areas where it has remained stable, the level of urban poverty almost doubled between 1994 and 2003, rising from 10.4% to 19.9%.¹⁸ The increase which has affected all groups, including private and public sector workers, as well as craftsmen and tradesmen will undoubtedly have had an impact on the situation of refugees.¹⁹ Like in Benin, there are no unemployment figures, but the number of available salaried jobs is extremely low for a country of some 11 million inhabitants; it amounts to no more than some 300,000, half of which are in the public sector and hence virtually unattainable for refugees.²⁰ Competition for jobs is clearly fierce and advertisements tend to attract an excessive number of often over-qualified applicants. To escape penury at home, a very large number of Burkinabé citizens have sought employment abroad, including some 200,000 who moved to Ivory Coast. The recent troubles in this country have led to a mass return of migrant workers which has robbed the country of remittances and added to an already difficult situation following the decline in the price of cotton, the major export commodity also of Burkina Faso.²¹

36. Considering the unpromising economic environment in the two countries, the Head of Resettlement Section recommended during his 1997 mission report to the region that a feasibility study of the Pilot Project be undertaken. Regrettably, however, this was not followed up. Had it been done, it might have yielded valuable data on the profile of refugees likely to integrate successfully despite the existing constraints, on economic niches and types of jobs available to them, and, in particular, on the nature and duration of the assistance programme required. In the absence of such information, the Resettlement Section, in collaboration with local government, designed the project on the basis of assumptions which turned out to be unrealistic. This applies in particular to the one-year period during which the refugees were expected to become self-sufficient.²² As result, programme parameters and assistance entitlements had to be repeatedly revised on an ad hoc basis as time went by, a practice which led to misunderstandings, misgivings and to conflicting information being issued by different actors. It will certainly have contributed to the unsatisfactory results obtained.

37. With the benefit of hindsight it appears questionable whether the design of an integration programme in a very poor developing country, a risky and complex undertaking indeed, should have been entrusted to the Resettlement Section, an administrative unit at Headquarters which was not normally concerned with this

¹⁸ Figures obtained from UNDP Office, Ouagadougou.

¹⁹ See *Burkina Faso – Cadre stratégique de lutte contre la pauvreté*, p.16-17, 20. It is perhaps worth noting that according to this document over 60% of available income accrues to wealthiest households, which constitutes one of the highest proportions of inequality in Africa (see p.20).

²⁰ Figure communicated by the French Embassy, Ouagadougou.

²¹ As noted by *The Economist*, 'West African cotton farmers are being crushed by rich-country subsidies, particularly the 3\$ billion-plus a year that America lavishes on its 25,000 cotton farmers, helping to make it the world's biggest exporter, depressing prices and wrecking the global market' (September 20-26, 2003, p.30). The attempt by four West African producers – Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali – to negotiate an elimination of these subsidies during the 2003 WTO summit in Cancun proved unsuccessful.

²² The period foreseen initially was only seven months. In the end, several refugees were assisted for over three years.

domain. Its primary responsibility had so far been limited to the processing of individual cases and their presentation to traditional resettlement countries, whereby the latter assume full responsibility for refugee integration and do not require any involvement on the part of UNHCR for this purpose.²³ In the case of Burkina Faso and Benin, however, it was clear that the government counterpart lacked the resources and the experience to facilitate the integration of refugees and required UNHCR support.

38. It would seem that the primary reason for the prominent role played by the Resettlement Section was due to the fact that the Pilot Project was funded from the Trust Fund for Resettlement the utilisation of which was the prerogative of the Section. The latter was not helped, however, by the fact that staff members in the Africa Bureau, which should normally have dealt with this kind of programme, were doubtful about the viability of the Project in the light of the limited resources available in these countries and appeared, on occasion, reluctant to make it their own. As result of these factors, administrative and tactical ownership of the Pilot Project remained principally with the Resettlement Section throughout, and frequent missions were undertaken from Geneva to monitor events and take corrective action as needed.

39. It stands to reason that future projects involving the integration of resettled refugees in developing countries should be designed, managed and monitored by administrative units professionally concerned with integration projects, without distinction being made between resettled and first asylum refugees. The difficulties and challenges are identical for both groups.

Lack of orientation materials and selection criteria

40. The available documentation suggests that the Resettlement Section dealt with Burkina Faso and Benin on terms similar to traditional resettlement countries and thus followed normal working practices. This approach, however, did not take account of the fact that, for refugees, being resettled to one rather than the other means something so different that it can hardly be called by the same name. The memo in which the Section on 28 September 1998 informed selected UNHCR field offices in Africa and Western Asia of the existence of resettlement opportunities in the two countries contained no information which might have helped UNHCR field staff to brief potential refugee applicants on how they might cope with the living conditions and poor employment prospects they were likely to encounter,²⁴ nor did it provide any guidance to facilitate the selection of suitable applicants. In the end, some refugees were resettled to the two countries whose background and integration potential turned out to be clearly unsuitable.

41. Former UNHCR field staff interviewed by the evaluation team expressed regret that appropriate orientation materials had not been provided and spoke of their sense of remorse at having been involved in resettling refugees to countries

²³ It is significant in this respect that the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook lacks a chapter dealing with integration issues. This subject only came to be dealt with in detail in the *International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration* published in 2002.

²⁴ If anything, the information provided was misleadingly optimistic; the project description, for instance, states that qualified resettled refugees will be offered fixed term contracts in the public sector, something that never materialised (see project 98/TF/VAR/RE/500 (I), N21).

where they are likely to face a most uncertain future when they could have been presented to other destinations. Briefing materials prepared by the two countries themselves, such as the *Guide du réfugié au Burkina Faso* (1998) or the more recent *Stratégie de réinstallation des réfugiés en République du Bénin* (2002), are equally non-informative when it comes to the modalities of integration and material survival. Similarly, there is little in the Resettlement Handbook to indicate that the status of the two countries differs in any way from the others. The country chapters for Denmark and Benin, for instance, both state that health care is available to refugees on the same terms as nationals; in the case of Denmark the text goes on to say that it is free of charge, whereas in the case of Benin no further details are given. The reader cannot be expected to know that 60% of the population is unable pay for medical expenses²⁵ and that the resettled refugees risk finding themselves among the latter.

Lack of a development component

42. The above cited report on the mission by the Head of the Resettlement Section indicates that the Pilot Project was meant to have a significant development component. Assistance to resettled refugees should be 'integrated in the country's development programmes so as to benefit also the communities that will receive the refugees'.²⁶ To this end, Round Tables on the resettlement project were convened in the two countries in 1999 in order to solicit the support of in-country donor representatives, UN agencies and NGOs.²⁷ The presentations prepared for the occasion by the respective governments indicate that they saw this as an opportunity to set out their needs and obtain additional development funding. The document submitted by Benin is particularly detailed and contains a substantial analysis of the constraints the country faced in the employment, health and education sectors²⁸ and details additional requirements.

43. While the 'shopping list' submitted by the two governments may be considered somewhat excessive in view of the small size of the Pilot Project it is regrettable that there seems to have been virtually no follow up to the Round Table discussions on the part of donors, the UNHCR or, indeed, the two governments. Only one of the projects presented, the refugee reception centre in Ouagadougou, received some degree of funding support from Canada but its construction is still not complete. Instead of becoming a well-publicised initiative involving a wide range support from donors, local agencies and institutions as had originally been intended, the Pilot Project thus remained an activity of very limited scope which virtually disappeared from view as far as donor representatives are concerned. This must be attributed at least in part to the implementation problems the Project was soon to encounter.

²⁵ Figure provided by the UNHCR Representative.

²⁶ *Rapport de mission au Burkina Faso, 24-27 Novembre 1997*, p.2.

²⁷ 'La table-ronde devra en effet être une manifestation de la solidarité internationale en faveur du Burkina pour son acceptation du partage du fardeau', Report on Meeting with CONAREF, 1 September 1998.

²⁸ See *Problematique de la réinstallation de réfugiés en République du Bénin*, prepared for the Round Table, 26-27 July 1999.

Different treatment of resettled and first asylum refugees

44. At the time the Pilot Project began there were some 2900 first asylum refugees in Benin and some 1800 in Burkina Faso.²⁹ These were assisted from the normal annual programme budget and received the limited allocations which have become habitual in UNHCR's urban refugee programmes, especially since the recent funding crisis. Regular assistance for them rarely exceeds a period of three to six months. The resettled, on the other hand, were supported from the rather more generous Trust Fund for Resettlement and obtained higher monthly subsistence grants for an extended period, in some cases for up to three years, as well as access to micro-credit, health care and educational support. In Benin, resettled refugees even receive a separate registration card from the authorities.

45. Considering the fact that first asylum and resettled refugees often come from the same countries (Chad, the two Congos and the Great Lakes region) and face the same set of problems, the difference in treatment can scarcely be justified. As witnessed by this evaluation, many first asylum refugees are subject to poverty and ill health, and are as much in need of integration assistance - which principally means access to gainful employment - as the resettled. Moreover, the superior levels of financial support granted to the resettled did in most cases not have a durable impact by furthering their integration. In fact, the opposite seems to have been the case. The generous assistance provided at the start granted them a livelihood which they could not hope to sustain with local incomes³⁰, and when assistance for the group was terminated in 2002-3 their standard of living declined rapidly. Many were forced to sell their possessions and move to cheaper accommodation until their situation became no different from that of the first asylum refugees (for details see section III. below).

46. This points to what is perhaps the most fundamental lesson to be learnt from this experience: a resettlement programme can only succeed in the presence of a socio-economic basis with enough potential to allow for the attainment of self-reliance on the part of ALL able-bodied and economically active refugees in the given country. In developing countries such socio-economic integration must be seen as a long-term developmental process which requires an equally long-term and carefully targeted commitment on the part of all actors engaged in the development process. An enhanced level of assistance given to a selected group of people for a limited period of time is not likely to have any lasting effect and may do more harm than good. The need for a long-term developmental input in refugee situations has long been recognised and, as pointed out above, had even been foreseen for the Pilot Project, albeit with exclusive focus on the resettled. The issue has been taken up most recently in the DLI (Development through Local Integration) concept³¹ proposed by the High Commissioner; it forms the backbone of the strategy recommended in the concluding part of this paper.

²⁹ See Annex E.

³⁰ A family with five children was entitled to CFA 170,000 per month which is higher than most salaries in Burkina (communication by CREDO staff).

³¹ See *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*, UNHCR Geneva, May 2003, p.23-26.

Contradiction between resettlement IN and OUT

47. The Pilot Project began at a time when refugees were being resettled for different reasons out of both Benin and Burkina Faso. The UNHCR Office in Ouagadougou had for some time been presenting a considerable number of refugees for resettlement to the USA on the grounds of criterion 4.9 (lack of local integration prospects). A resettlement mission undertaken to the country in October 1998 remarked on this critically and pointed out that the approach adopted had been 'too broad' and had become a pull-factor attracting other refugees to Burkina in search of resettlement. Moreover it gave 'the wrong signals' to those refugees who had been resettled IN Burkina Faso and 'could probably compromise the success of the project'. The consequence was that resettlement out of Burkina Faso fell from 90 to 8 cases between 1998 and 1999, and ceased altogether as of 2001.³²

48. The available documents appear to show that this decision was not taken because it had been found that integration prospects in Burkina Faso had previously been too negatively assessed or had actually improved; the latter is very unlikely to have been the case since, as pointed out above, urban poverty increased considerably in the period. The primary motive for the change of policy appears to have been the desire on the part of the Resettlement Section to protect the Pilot Project and create the right environment for its success: resettlement OUT had to stop in order for resettlement IN to succeed. Considering the extremely difficult economic environment in Burkina Faso and the serious integration problems *de facto* faced there by many refugees, UNHCR's reversal of policy - from resettling perhaps too many to resettling none - cannot be considered as having been based on objective criteria and is thus hardly justified.

49. Two years later the decrease of resettlement opportunities OUT of the country provided the spark for an event which had a lasting impact on the country's refugee policy and brought resettlement INTO Burkina Faso to a premature halt. This was the hunger strike and the occupation of the cathedral of Ouagadougou organised by a group of refugees which lasted from May till September 2000 and became a widely reported political issue in the country. The 86 participants were mostly first asylum refugees whose protest was, according to a UNHCR report issued at the time, 'triggered by negative written decisions received from the Resettlement Section following individual assessment of their claims'.³³ The group also included a small number of resettled refugees who were unhappy with their situation in the country and demanded to be moved elsewhere. The authorities were taken aback by the high profile nature of the protest action and decided to suspend the CONAREF Selection Committee. Despite repeated requests on the part of UNHCR, the Committee did not reconvene until February 2003. In the intervening period neither resettlement nor refugee status applications were processed by the authorities who now face a backlog of some 500 asylum seekers.

50. Another aspect of the resettlement IN/OUT conundrum in Burkina Faso concerns the group of 23 refugees from Rwanda and Burundi most of whom been transferred there by UNHCR for their own safety from other countries of first

³² See Annex D.

³³ Note to Tripartite Consultations, 3 July 2000, cited in J.Kofod, *Evaluation of UNHCR's Fund for Enhancing Resettlement Activities*, Geneva, 2001, p.24.

asylum.³⁴ This was in early 1997, before the resettlement Pilot Project was negotiated with the authorities. It seems that once the Pilot project was in operation, UNHCR informed the refugees that they had been officially resettled in Burkina Faso and would not be permitted to apply for resettlement elsewhere.³⁵ The positive result of this decision was that the refugees were able to benefit from the generous assistance levels provided by the Pilot Project. From the point of view of principle, however, it is questionable whether the refugees should have been deemed resettled by the Office simply because they arrived in the country at the time the Project began. Resettlement, in the sense of a definitive choice of destination, should normally take place with the full and express consent of the person concerned. It seems that this group of refugees was not provided with such an opportunity, a fact that remains an abiding source of grievance as far as they are concerned.

51. The IN/OUT issue also surfaced in Benin where it was complicated by the fact that in the late 90s the country was used as a staging post to resettle a group of Tutsis from first countries of asylum in the Great Lakes region to the United States.³⁶ It is said that at the same time the Tutsis were being resettled OUT a number of Hutu refugees arrived in Benin to be resettled IN, a fact which led to a sense of dismay among the latter who felt discriminated against. The fact that numerous refugees were departing to more distant shores while others were told that Benin had to be their final destination did little to help the integration process. In the circumstances it is not surprising that in Benin too, the Resettlement Section adopted a policy that actively discouraged resettlement OUT in favour of resettlement IN. The above cited mission report applauds BO Cotonou's strict approach on resettling refugees with no prospect for local integration and states that this should be pursued 'in particular in view of the arrival of future resettled refugees'. The report concludes with the recommendation that 'resettlement applications of refugees under 4.9 (lack of durable solutions) to be given low priority'.³⁷ However, like in the case of Burkina Faso, this 'low priority' was in no way based on an objective assessment of the integration environment in Benin or the actual situation of the refugees. It is therefore a highly questionable procedure in which assistance criteria are adjusted to facilitate the attainment of strategic goals when the opposite should really be the case.

52. The above illustrates the extreme difficulty of striking a balance between resettlement IN and OUT in the case of developing countries such as Benin and Burkina Faso. At the time the Pilot Project was initiated several UNHCR staff members voiced opposition to it precisely because they felt that resettling simultaneously in opposite directions was not a credible or sustainable option for UNHCR to pursue. The Resettlement Section's attempt to solve the problem – maximum curtailment of resettlement OUT with the exception of protection and security cases – proved to be highly contentious and is difficult to defend on the basis of objective criteria. This brings us back to the point made above, namely that resettlement to a developing country must be based on a development oriented

³⁴ One of them moved to Burkina Faso on his own accord to pursue his studies and was subsequently included among the resettled.

³⁵ UNHCR obtained official agreement for their resettlement from the Burkinabé authorities only in November 1997, many months after the refugees had arrived in the country (see *Rapport de Mission au Burkina Faso 24-27 Novembre 1997*, p.4).

³⁶ These resettlement departures to the USA peaked in 2000 as shown in Annex D.

³⁷ *Resettlement Mission Report to Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo and Benin 12-25 October 1998*, para. 33.

integration programme accessible to all refugees in the country and designed in such a way that cases falling into category 4.9 – ‘lack of local integration prospects’ – no longer arise. Only then can it be justified to disregard applicants under this category.

Limited capacity of UNHCR’s implementing partners

53. As noted above, UNHCR’s principal implementing partners in the Pilot Project were two government agencies and two NGOs: CNAR and CARITAS in Benin, and CONAREF and CREDO in Burkina Faso. Since January 2003, CPPS (*Centre de Prospective et de la Promotion Sociale*) has assumed responsibility for the education and vocational training sectors in Benin. All remain currently engaged in running the refugee assistance programmes in the two countries whereby the division of labour between the respective government and NGO partners is not always fully transparent.

54. The principal responsibility of the government counterparts was in the legal assistance sector whereby it was noticed that while documentation and paperwork were accomplished as needed very few additional initiatives were devised to facilitate the integration of refugees in the local society or economy. No persistent networking with other potential partners in government, embassies or the private sector was undertaken and no high level interventions were attempted. The entire burden of responsibility rested on minor officials in the agencies concerned who did what they could but were not in any position to influence the higher echelons of government. This meant that the authorities’ declared willingness to integrate resettled refugees was not matched by commensurate action and thus had little practical impact.

55. The evaluation team sought to assess the experience and implementing capacity of the governmental and private implementing partners through in-depth interviews with the staff members concerned. Issues raised covered programme materials (LOIs and budgets), assistance practices as well as reporting and filing systems; special emphasis was placed upon the community services sector in the light of the tension between staff and refugees and the series of confrontational events in the recent past, especially in Cotonou.

56. The recent evaluation of the community services function in UNHCR shows that a major share of the responsibility for the integration of refugees lies on the shoulders of the social workers employed in the field. The report defines the crucial protection and assistance role of this sector as follows:

Whether through participatory process and community-based structures, through the targeting of assistance or self-reliance initiatives, the objective of the Community Service function is to ensure that basic physical, social and economic entitlements are accessible equally by all members of the refugee population³⁸.

³⁸ CASA Consulting, *The Community Services Function in UNHCR - An Independent Evaluation*, Geneva, 2003, p. vii.

57. Despite its importance, however, the community services function has, as pointed out in the report, been significantly eroded within UNHCR in recent years. The relatively low priority now assigned to this sector was tangible in the condition of UNHCR's implementing partners in Benin and Burkina Faso which were clearly understaffed and undertrained, whereby it must be pointed out that the agencies in Burkina Faso, in particular CREDO, appeared to have a significantly higher degree of experience and expertise than those in Benin.

58. In both countries, however, staff dealing with refugees on a day-to-day basis had no knowledge of UNHCR policies on key issues such as women, children and the elderly. They were not acquainted with the content of the UNHCR Community Services Handbook or the recent Resettlement Integration Handbook, a major drawback here being that some of these materials do not appear to be available in French. As a result, staff seemed to have a limited understanding of their role and mission and were not adequately familiar with key concepts which should guide their work, such as 'integration', 'community development', 'vulnerable categories', 'counselling', 'networking' etc. It was particularly noticeable that staff seemed to have little awareness that

refugee participation and self-management are fundamental, assuming a respect for the capabilities of refugees and the belief that, as human beings, they have the right to control their own lives³⁹.

59. The consequence of this was evident in the reports submitted. The implementing partners' (and indeed UNHCR's) reports tended to concentrate on what has been delivered, on activities planned or on the budget cuts performed. They do not report the impact of these measures on the assisted population and do not attempt to assess any unintended negative impact they may have. Monthly or annual reports contain no detail on differential access to assistance and/or the effectiveness of the assistance provided. In practical terms this can translate itself into an attitude whereby refugees are expected to be no more than docile recipients of aid; if they protest, as many of them do, they are seen as adversaries who have to be contained. The result is a lack of dialogue and mutual engagement which can lead to a profound degree of distrust and hostility between the two sides. Evidence of such a gulf between refugees and project staff could be seen in Benin; it is undoubtedly a psychological factor which hinders the integration of both resettled and first asylum refugees.

60. The process involved has also been noted in above mentioned community services evaluation which warns that

staff who receive little systematic training in how to do social and situation analysis and lack comparative experience of other refugee settings, may simply overlook or be unsure how to address the range of social problems that invariably emerge.⁴⁰

³⁹ Community Services in UNHCR: An Introduction, Geneva, May 1996, p.16.

⁴⁰ CASA Consulting, *The Community Services Function in UNHCR - An independent evaluation*, Geneva, March 2003, p. vii.

61. There is clearly an urgent need for capacity building and staff training among the UNHCR implementing partners in the two countries concerned. This also includes the recently appointed UNHCR national community services officer in Cotonou whose task of supervising and monitoring the implementing partners would thereby be greatly facilitated.

Ineffective micro-credit programme

62. Over 60 million CFA (US\$ 104,290) were disbursed under the income generation sector of the Pilot Project in Burkina Faso and Benin, with the bulk of these funds allocated to micro-credit programmes.⁴¹ However, despite the substantial means made available the programme failed to have the desired impact. Most refugee business ventures collapsed or never got off the ground, reimbursement rates were exceedingly poor, and many loans were used for consumption or onward travel. The main reasons for this poor performance as far as Benin is concerned are explained in a recent report by Kathrine Shamraj, a UNHCR Intern who worked at the Office in Cotonou in the summer of 2003. The principle findings of the report are summarised hereunder.

UNHCR guidelines not observed

63. The report documents that the Benin microcredit programme as run by the local implementing partner CARITAS was not compatible with professional standards and failed to take account of the guidelines for the micro-credit sector laid down by UNHCR. Most notably, it was administered by the same agency which is also responsible for providing social services and cash assistance to refugees, a combination which can only be problematic. The report concludes:

With no clear-cut separation between financial and social services, the current micro-credit structure discourages repayment, inhibits motivation to succeed to the point where reimbursement is feasible, undercuts future loan applicants, and undermines integration. Unchanged, the current program will continue to discourage refugees from achieving the dignity of financial independence and stability.⁴²

64. A related problem is that CARITAS as an organisation lacks any professional expertise in the micro-credit sector, in contravention to the UNHCR guidelines which state that

UNHCR will provide funding for micro finance programs only when there is a partner with a proven expertise in implementing such programs. Micro finance is best implemented by a focused agency rather than as an add-on to a multi-sector-programmed agency.[...] The planning and implementation of micro-credit and saving schemes require special knowledge and skills for the assessment of the socio-economic context and the profile of the prospective

⁴¹ This amounts to over CFA1 million or some US\$ 1,738 per case.

⁴² Kathrine Shamraj, *UNHCR Microcredit Programme in Benin – Report and Recommendations*, Cotonou, August 2003, p.1.

target/client group. Also required is meticulous management of program implementation according to proven standardized practices and specific financial and accounting skills.⁴³

65. The report shows that there was little evidence of 'specialist knowledge' or 'meticulous management' in the way the project was administered. Weaknesses identified include lack of professional training and evaluation, condescending and disrespectful interviewing methods, incomplete or poor quality applications, excessively long waiting times for decisions and inadequate follow-up. The fact that this programme has been running virtually unchanged now for several years despite its poor results, combined with the fact that the micro-credit funds are not given to Caritas as a refundable line of credit, does not stimulate the organisation to improve its performance or make greater efforts to ensure the reimbursement of loans.

66. Other shortcomings of the programme are the interest-free nature of the loans and the selection criteria for beneficiaries. According to the UNHCR guidelines, charging interest should be compulsory to ensure the expansion of the loan fund and cover operational expenses. Recent experience with micro-credits in Mexico confirmed the crucial importance of charging interest and its role in developing a sense of ownership for the programme among the refugees; this can only be achieved if a specialist organisation runs the micro-credit scheme.⁴⁴

67. With respect to first asylum refugees, the application guidelines in effect in Cotonou require that applicants should have no source of income and that they should not have previously received a scholarship or vocational training from UNHCR. These requirements seem to have had the unintended effect of barring access to loans to refugees who have the qualifications to use them in a profitable way. Instead, they encourage those with no resources and little integration prospects to apply for loans which they then tend to use for consumption since they have no other income to fall back on. In this respect the report mentions the need to consider financial support (rent payments and food supplements) for successful loan applicants in order to avoid them having to use of the loan to cover living expenses.

68. With respect to the resettled refugees in both Benin (and Burkina Faso, see below) it is remarkable to note that the bulk of micro-credit loans granted to this group was issued in 2002, years after they first arrived in the country and in the very year their assistance was being phased out.⁴⁵ The refugees therefore perceived them as their last chance to get financial assistance from UNHCR, and many of them used the 'microcredit' to repay debts, settle rent arrears or leave the country. Moreover, there appears to have been a misunderstanding about the nature of this type of assistance from the very beginning; indeed, the CNAR selection mission in Tanzania had informed the refugees they would receive funding for microprojects, not loans for microcredits!⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁴ Communication with Louis Varese, UNHCR HQ.

⁴⁵ See Annex F, disbursements under sector N. (income generation),

⁴⁶ Statement by senior CNAR official during debriefing meeting in Cotonou. This statement explained the widespread conviction among the refugees that they were promised grants not loans.

Unfavourable business climate and unmotivated applicants

69. It would, however, be unjustified to attribute the poor performance of the micro-credit sector exclusively to the working practices of Caritas. The economic situation of Benin and the high rate of unemployment make for an extremely competitive milieu in which young and old are compelled to engage in small scale business ventures of every kind to survive. The streets of Cotonou are full of “commerçants” trying to sell anything and everything, and the available margin of profit seems to be extremely limited, especially for outsiders. The transport sector is one of the few that is not saturated and some refugees did indeed succeed to establish themselves in this field with the help of Caritas micro credits.

70. With respect to the resettled refugees in particular, another significant drawback concerns their qualifications and professional inclinations. Under the Pilot Project it was assumed that most refugees would attain self-reliance through self-employment in the small business sector since regular jobs are very hard to find. Micro-credit was therefore made available to virtually all cases and the total funds available were divided up accordingly. Many of the resettled refugees, however, are former ‘white collar workers’ (office workers, journalists, economists, pharmacists, government official etc.) who have no commercial qualifications and no interest to engage in this activity. Their low motivation, combined with their disaffection with their country of resettlement, certainly increased the failure rate of the micro-credit scheme. It should be pointed out in this context that the implementing partners did try to place such refugees in jobs commensurate with their qualifications but the success rate turned out to be minimal.

71. The Shamraj report concludes by proposing several options to restructure the micro-credit program which are currently being considered by the UNHCR Office in Cotonou. The most promising of these may be to engage in a new partnership with an accredited, professional agency. The report identifies two agencies that may fulfil the basic conditions required for such a programme, i.e. willingness to finance start-up (*démarrage*), ability to finance a range of sectors, and willingness to grant loans under minimal conditions.

Disappointing performance also in Burkina Faso

72. The micro-credit programme in Burkina Faso seemed to exhibit short-comings in some ways similar to those found in Benin, although the evaluation team could not investigate the matter as thoroughly as the UNHCR Intern had been able to do in Cotonou. The agency initially entrusted with the programme for the resettled caseload, the *Réseau des Caisses Populaires du Burkina* (RCPB), had the advantage of being a professional micro-credit agency with a high success rate. It seemed, however, reluctant to commit itself to the programme, doubted the credit worthiness of the refugees and issued only two loans in a two-year period, neither of which was fully repaid. From January 2002, the programme was therefore transferred to the UNHCR implementing partner CREDO (Christian Relief and Development Organisation), with the inevitable drawback that responsibility for grants and loans was thereby assigned to the same agency.

73. Unlike CARITAS Benin, however, CREDO is an agency with professional experience in the micro-credit field, normally charges interest for credit and has achieved a 95% repayment rate for some 5000 loans it has issued to Burkinabé

nationals. By the time the agency was ready to issue the loans to the resettled refugees, however, it was too late for their experience in this domain to make any difference to the results. The refugees' monthly allowances were being phased out at the time and many were experiencing financial difficulties. The consequence was that, like in Benin, they saw the 'loans' as their final UNHCR assistance entitlement and, almost without exception, used part of the money to settle debts and cover living expenses.

74. Apart from confirming once more the pertinence of the UNHCR guidelines on the topic, the unsatisfactory outcome of the micro-credit schemes in both Benin and Burkina Faso contains a lesson of particular relevance to resettlement situations such as those covered by the Pilot Project. It is clearly unrealistic to assume that poor employment prospects in emerging resettlement countries can be compensated for by routinely offering access to micro-credit to all refugees. Only a limited number of them will have the background, the inclination or the skills to set themselves up as traders in a tight and highly competitive market. This must be taken into account when designing the programme and establishing selection criteria.

Resettled refugees reluctant to engage

75. The most common explanation for the poor performance of the Pilot Project provided by both government staff and NGO implementing partners was the negative attitude adopted by the resettled refugees. Implementing partners in Benin were particularly insistent on this point of view which appeared also to be shared by some UNHCR staff members. The observation was made that the resettled refugees received a very generous level of assistance and were, through the micro-credit scheme, given a privileged opportunity to establish themselves in their countries of resettlement. Instead of making the best of the chance offered, however, the refugees took little initiative, failed in their business dealings, or used their loans for consumption. In doing so they wanted to demonstrate that they could not remain in their current countries of resettlement and had to be resettled elsewhere. In these circumstances any effort made by project staff to facilitate the integration of refugees was supposedly doomed to failure.

76. There is no doubt that most of the refugees were severely disillusioned by the reality they encountered upon arrival in Benin and Burkina Faso, a reality in no way commensurate with what the term 'resettlement' had led them to expect. There is also no doubt that the above-listed shortcomings in the design and implementation of the Pilot Project contributed much to heightening this disillusionment and worsening the relationship between refugees and project staff, a relationship which, in Benin, appears to have reached a level of considerable tension and acrimony. These facts, however, do not mean that the failure of the project is to be attributed primarily to the attitude of the refugees.

77. They are, first of all, not a homogeneous group, but come from a number of different countries and different backgrounds, and the assumption that they are all the same is clearly erroneous. Secondly, when discussing the refugees case by case with the implementing partner, the evaluation team noted that there are in fact a considerable number of refugees who have made very persistent efforts to find employment commensurate with their qualifications; despite numerous attempts and the support of the UNHCR and the implementing partner their search was often

fruitless. Lastly, it is necessary to differentiate between various stages which the refugees appear to have gone through in the course of the years they have been in the countries concerned. The following development seems to have occurred:

- an initial stage during which the refugees received a higher level of financial support than they could expect to earn on the labour market; this appears indeed to have been a disincentive to local integration and to have aroused unrealistic expectations
- a second stage when they received funding for micro-projects many of which failed for reasons set out above
- a third stage marked by the termination of UNHCR assistance; by that time those refugees who were able to do so had found sources of support.

78. The income stratification that has arisen among the resettled refugees since UNHCR assistance was phased out reflects the stratification among the refugees of first asylum in that a minority have secured an adequate level of income whereas a majority are facing various levels of penury. As will be examined in more detail in the following section, this stratification reflects the inherent coping capacity of the refugees as well as the socio-economic realities of the countries in which they find themselves.

79. The conclusion is that, as also indicated above, a superior level of funding injected for a limited period of time for the benefit of small group of people is unlikely to make any significant difference to the success of a such a programme. This is especially the case if the programme is also beset by the kind of weaknesses outlined above. The error made by those who believe that the refugees are primarily to blame for its failure resides in the assumption that the availability of such funding alone should be sufficient to make a lasting impact on the refugees' integration potential. This opinion principally reflects disappointment at the refugees' failure to fall in line with preordained assistance arrangements and programme expectations, and therefore says more about the attitude of project staff than that of the refugees.

The situation of the resettled refugees

80. A full-scale evaluation of the situation of resettled and first asylum refugees in the two countries would ideally require a socio-economic survey based on scientific indicators which would make it possible to compare their situation with that of the local population. This is a major undertaking requiring a significant research input and goes beyond what is normally intended and resourced in UNHCR evaluations. It should be noted, however, that in-country research of this type is regularly ongoing as part of the poverty reduction strategy process in both Burkina Faso and Benin.⁴⁷ UNHCR might wish to associate itself more closely with that process for this and other pertinent reasons and ensure that a study of this type be included in the relevant work programmes.

Survey method

81. For the purpose of this report the evaluation team decided to visit all remaining resettled and a selected number of first asylum refugees⁴⁸ in their homes, in order to interview them together with their dependents in a familiar setting and gain a first hand impression of their living conditions. None of the refugee households visited were benefiting from monthly subsistence allowances since these had been discontinued for all resettled refugees; they were, however, still benefiting from basic assistance in the health, education and employment generation sectors at the same rate and under the same criteria as the other refugees hosted in the two countries. Questions revolved around the following topics

- selection and pre-departure orientation (for the resettled)
- reason for flight (for first asylum refugees)
- circumstances of arrival
- type of assistance received
- employment and income situation
- relations with neighbours and the local community
- situation of children and dependents
- health and education issues
- future plans

⁴⁷ See for instance CSLP Burkina Faso, p.73-74.

⁴⁸ They were selected by CARITAS in Benin and the Refugee Committee in Burkina Faso. In both countries we asked to see a representative sample covering refugees of different nationalities and levels of income.

82. The refugees were generally delighted to receive a visit at home and pointed out that this was a rare, and in several cases, unprecedented event. They were more than willing to share information and generally spoke in what appeared to be a spontaneous and unpremeditated manner. The evaluation team could, evidently, not be certain to what extent the information obtained was accurate, and in a few cases the impression was gained that the whole truth was not being revealed. For evaluation purposes it was therefore of equal, if not greater, importance to view the domestic environment and the appearance and demeanour of all family members, in particular the children. Special attention was given to

- the quality of the accommodation
- availability of water and sanitation
- type of furniture, equipment and clothing
- food stocks and cooking facilities.

83. Before discussing the findings in detail some general points are of note. The first concerns the difference between Benin and Burkina Faso. The latter is considerably poorer than the former, which may account for the fact that the proportion of resettled cases who departed is greater for Burkina Faso than for Benin (46% as opposed to 32%). The remaining cases, however, appear to be socially better integrated in Burkina Faso than in Benin; relations with the local community as well as with the UNHCR implementing partners seemed to be significantly better. In Benin, a surprising number of refugees seemed to live in fear of some of their neighbours and worried about being targeted by voodoo magic; moreover, the level of trust between them and the UNHCR implementing partners was clearly at a low ebb, as mentioned above.

84. Despite this difference, however, the living conditions and income levels of the refugee households fell into a pattern which applies equally to both countries and, indeed, to both resettled and first asylum refugees. For all households it turned out that the factor which made the greatest difference to the refugees' standard of living was not whether they had found employment but whether they had access to funds from abroad, either through remittances or, less frequently, through trade. The second most important factor was the extent to which they were members of a larger community through which they could pool resources and assist each other. Individual salaries earned from the local labour market were generally found to be insufficient for the upkeep of a family and had to be supplemented from other sources. The same holds true for the poorer section of the local population where every able-bodied member, including the children, need to be engaged in some form wage-earning activity. In doing so they often benefit from an extended community and family network, unlike most refugees who tend to be more isolated and hence have less access to wage-earning opportunities.

85. Another general observation made with respect to both resettled and first asylum refugees in Benin concerned what appeared to the evaluation team to be seriously unmet needs in the health sector. In many homes visited certain family members were evidently unwell and spoke of having no access to proper medical treatment or being unable to afford drugs which had been prescribed for them. The situation in a number homes with many children seemed particularly preoccupying

as mothers were clearly suffering from ailments and seemed barely able to cope with their responsibilities. The concerns raised by this were confirmed by a recent expert evaluation of the health sector in Benin which noted that the parallel health care system set up by UNHCR's governmental implementing partner CNAR was providing an even poorer service than that available to nationals of comparable income and recommended that it be replaced with a different arrangement as soon as possible.⁴⁹ While more funds were available for the treatment of resettled than first asylum refugees it is clear that the nature of the system as such – which refugees had been complaining about for some time – must have acted as a further disincentive to integration.

Statistical findings

86. In the light of the income pattern noted above the refugee households can be roughly divided into the following four categories, in order of their level of income:

1. Employed, with foreign or community support
2. Unemployed, with foreign or community support
3. Employed, without foreign or community support
4. Unemployed, without foreign or community support

87. The table below lists the number of cases/persons per category among the resettled refugees. In order to give a complete picture of their situation, two further categories have been added, one for students and one for departed cases. The percentage figures refer to cases rather than persons since this reflects the income situation of the principal breadwinners.

Table 1: Statistical findings on status of resettled refugees

A. Burkina Faso

	Cases/persons	% of cases
1) Employed, with foreign or community support	4 / 13	15.0
2) Unemployed, with foreign or community support	3 / 15	11.5
3) Employed, no foreign or community support	3 / 16	11.5
4) Unemployed, no foreign or community support	2 / 2	8.0
5) Students	2 / 2	8.0
6) Departed	12 / 27	46.0
Total	26 ⁵⁰ / 75	100

⁴⁹ Dr. Marie-Claude Bottineau, *Rapport de Mission en République du Bénin, 20-30/8/2003*.

⁵⁰ Officially 25 cases but one family member is a student, hence counted under category 5.

B. Benin

1) Employed, with foreign or community support	10 / 53	27
2) Unemployed, with foreign or community support	6 / 16	16
3) Employed, no foreign or community support		
4) Unemployed, no foreign or community support	5 / 28	14
5) Students	4 / 15	11
6) Departed ⁵¹	12 / 39	32
Total	37 ⁵² / 151	100

C. Total of A. + B.

1) Employed, with foreign or community support	14 / 66 ⁵³	22
2) Unemployed, with foreign or community support	9 / 31	14
3) Employed, no foreign or community support	3 / 16	5
4) Unemployed, no foreign or community support	7 / 30	11
5) Students	6 / 17	10
6) Departed	24 / 66	38
Total	63 / 226	100

88. As noted above, the refugees are a far from homogeneous group, and the categorisation listed in the table is no more than a rough summary of a complex and diversified picture. It does, however, provide a telling illustration why the Pilot Project, five years after its commencement, must be declared as having failed in its objective to ensure the integration of the refugees into their country of resettlement. Refugees in the first category who are only ones that can be considered economically integrated in their countries of resettlement comprise only 22% of the total, whereas categories 2, 4 and the departed who together must be reckoned among those who failed to integrate amount to a total of 63%. In this it must be considered that the relative success of category 1 is only attributable to a combination of revenue earned from in-country employment with revenue secured from abroad or through communal coping strategies.

89. The most significant category in this respect is the third which comprises cases that are able to survive only on revenue generated from local employment without access to additional support, a condition one would normally expect to be indicative of true economic integration. With only 5% of cases it is, however, numerically the smallest and the situation of the incumbents who all reside in Burkina Faso throws a telling light on the constraints which limit integration potential. One of these is the only refugee to hold a stable public sector job in either country, a position he was only able to secure on account of having worked in Burkina Faso previously; he is, moreover, married to a Burkina national. The other case concerns a refugee with no contacts abroad and no local community who is thus forced to rely only on his

⁵¹ This figure does not include one individual who passed away.

⁵² Originally 35 cases, but two families units have split up since arrival and one IC passed away, hence the number counted is 37.

⁵³ This figure includes 24 members of one extended family of Tchadian origin.

meagre salary as a night watchman; as a result, his family is living below the poverty line. These cases illustrate the vital role of prior contacts in the highly competitive labour market as well as the extremely precarious existence likely to be faced by those who have to depend only on a single source of revenue. Foreign and community support are thus indispensable and hence require to be discussed in some more detail.

Types of refugee generated support

90. Foreign and community support have this in common that they are mostly generated by the refugees themselves. As indicated above, 'foreign support' is of two types. The first and most common consists of remittances sent by relatives or friends most of whom are refugees resettled to Canada or the United States. This points to what is undoubtedly the most important 'secondary benefit' of resettlement to developed countries, namely that it enables refugees to help themselves by transferring a portion of their new found earnings back to those who have been left behind, a phenomenon which has been frequently observed. Relatives or friends in developed countries, or, indeed, in neighbouring countries, may also provide vital contacts to establish trade links, the second type of 'foreign support' for the purpose of this survey.

91. The phenomenon as a whole raises the wider issue of the difference between resettlement to developed and developing countries. Judging by the situation in Benin and Burkina Faso, refugees resettled to the latter are not likely to be in a position ever to provide much secondary benefit to others; instead, they have to depend on it themselves, a fact which inevitably heightens their sense of having been greatly disadvantaged. In the circumstances it stands to reason that refugees with relatives in developed countries should, if at all possible, be enabled to join them there instead of becoming a lasting burden on them as a result of being transferred to a country where their chances of attaining self-sufficiency are minimal. Both Burkina Faso and Benin provide examples of the latter.

92. Several types of community support were in evidence. Generally it can be said that a measure of mutual support could be observed among almost all groups of refugees but in certain cases it seemed to play a far greater role than in others. One concerned the Tchadian refugees in Benin who appeared to be much helped by the existence of a sizeable Chadian community in Cotonou which clearly provided a certain safety net for the needy, the elderly and the unemployed. The other concerned a group of refugees from Equatorial Guinea who were quite isolated in Cotonou but had such close pre-existing links among themselves that they were able to pool resources effectively and manage to make a living through a jointly owned local transport enterprise. The latter were the only group of refugees who were reasonably satisfied with their country of residence, wanted to remain in the region and did not ask to leave. Refugees from the Great Lakes area seemed to be much less closely knit, unable to fall back on larger or more prosperous expatriate communities in either country, and hence more prone to destitution; the same also seemed to apply to Tchadians in Burkina Faso.

93. For the purpose of resettlement to developing countries the lessons from the community support situation are not unexpected. Strong community ties are a key to survival. The chances of success in a resettlement programme are clearly much

enhanced if the refugees involved are closely knit communities or if they can associate with a pre-existing community of their own in the country of destination. This must be taken account in the planning and selection phases, and well-targeted aid programmes could aim to strengthen such links.

Hardship cases

94. The evaluation team encountered a number of cases who were clearly living in a state of severe material hardship and / or mental distress, while a number of others seemed to be in a vulnerable or highly precarious condition. They include all those in category 4, as well as several in categories 2, 3 and 5, and may be estimated at some 17 cases which is equivalent to 27% of the total number of cases resettled, or 43% of those still remaining in the two countries. This figure is relatively high and provides another indication of the limited level of integration obtained.

95. Four types of cases may be distinguished, whereby several cases fall into more than one type. The first concerns families with many small children living in insalubrious premises and visibly suffering from various degrees of ill health; access to health care was, indeed, the single most important worry for the refugees as a whole. The second type concerns vulnerable groups comprising female headed households, the elderly and the chronically ill or mentally disturbed. None of them were receiving any assistance since allowances for all resettled refugees had been discontinued; at present only one-time payments in cases of special hardship are provided. While some of these refugees have access to income or community support, a few others are quite alone and entirely unable to earn a living. Their cases should be re-examined with a view to finding a more durable source of support. Unaccompanied elderly refugees who are unemployable should be provided with a small pension.

96. The third type concerns single males who have been unable to integrate for a variety of reasons. With three cases, this category is rather small, and it would seem that the majority of single males in this situation probably left to other destinations; indeed 13 out of 23 departed cases are single males. Of those remaining, one is mentally disturbed and two have professional qualifications which are not in demand in Burkina Faso, their country of resettlement. One of them has unsuccessfully tried to embark on different activities whereas the other one has been less flexible. Both returned to Burkina Faso after failing to establish themselves in neighbouring countries and are presently destitute. In the light of their background, Burkina Faso should perhaps have been treated as a temporary haven for them in absence of any other venue, but not as a durable solution. The fourth and final type concerns students whose allowances were discontinued before they had completed their studies; their situation is discussed in more detail below.

Students and educational matters

97. A number of issues must be raised under this heading. There is, first of all, the situation of children at primary and secondary school. Both resettled and first asylum refugees receive funding for registration and school uniforms but, in Benin at least, no support is provided for the purchase of school books. The evaluation team found the lack of books to be a serious handicap which heightens the likelihood of

failure especially among children at secondary school and those taking their baccalaureat. The inclusion of a funding component for school books is therefore very much recommended.

98. The second point concerns the situation of students at university and in vocational training. It appears it was decided in 2002 to suspend all further monthly assistance to resettled refugees as of December of that year. This also included students who had not yet completed their education and who were therefore faced with the termination of their assistance in mid-stream. A decision of this kind is likely to be highly counterproductive as it endangers the students' success and, with it, the investment made by UNHCR in their education. It is therefore recommended that scholarships of students should be reinstated with immediate effect until they have fulfilled all requirements for their graduation, including the submission of their dissertations (*mémoire de thèse*). In more than one case it was found that the subject of the latter could be usefully oriented towards a topic likely to enhance the employability of the student concerned.

99. The issue of access to university also concerns the younger children of refugees currently resettled in Benin and Burkina Faso. Several of them show academic promise and may well achieve sufficiently good results to allow for university entrance. These students should be considered eligible for DAFI scholarships on the same basis as other refugees.

Departed cases

100. As indicated in the table above, 12 cases/27 persons out of 26 cases/73 persons left Burkina Faso, and 12 cases/39 persons out of 38 cases/153 persons left Benin. This amounts to 46% and 32% of cases respectively. Over half those who left are single males which is probably due to the fact that being single they are more mobile and require less resources to be on the move.

101. The fate of most of the departed is unknown but the prime reason for the high level of onward movement is clearly that the refugees concerned did not see a future for themselves in their countries of resettlement. This can be gleaned from letters addressed to UNHCR by some of the departed refugees in which they requested to be resettled elsewhere, or, failing that, to be returned to their countries of first asylum because they found themselves unable to make a living. Needless to say, these requests were not granted by the Office. Secondary resettlement was ruled out in any case and return to the first country of asylum could not be countenanced either. The evaluation team was, furthermore, informed by some of the remaining resettled refugees that those who left had departed because they saw no integration prospects for themselves. Considering the circumstances the refugees were found to be living in there is no reason to doubt these reports.

102. A number of departed refugees have reportedly asked for assistance in other Branch Offices, notably the UNHCR Office in Ghana, whereas others are said to have returned to Tanzania, their first country of asylum. Some Burundian refugees requested to be repatriated despite the ongoing conflict in their country of origin because they preferred to return rather than remain in a situation which they considered to be hopeless. It is not unlikely that some cases, the single males in particular, might have joined the migrants who are reportedly crossing the Sahara

via Niger and Libya in the hope of clandestine entry into Europe. The situation shows that resettlement in developing countries, if not managed successfully, may encourage refugees to engage in potentially hazardous journeys to uncertain destinations and swell the ranks of those trying to cross borders 'in an irregular manner.'

Refugee participation

103. The key role played by refugees and refugee organisations in facilitating the integration of refugees in traditional countries of resettlement is well known. The employment of refugee community workers is, moreover, part of UNHCR policies and has taken place in many countries where it has been shown to ease the work of implementing partners and help establish a greater atmosphere of trust between project staff and beneficiaries. In the light of this it was surprising that the documents setting out the plans for the implementation and administration of the Pilot Project did not at any stage foresee a role for refugees in this process. As noted above, the entire project was established in a top down manner, with refugees as mere recipients who were expected to fit in with the assistance parameters established for them.⁵⁴

104. When this was discussed with the UNHCR Branch Office it was stated that attempts had recently been made to set up a refugee committee in the country but this had proved unworkable on account of disagreements among the refugees themselves. In Burkina Faso, on the other hand, a refugee committee had been established successfully. The latter is indeed functioning well, as witnessed by the evaluation team.

105. It is clear, however, that these measures have been undertaken recently and could not have had any impact on improving the Pilot Project. Moreover, the 2002 project evaluation made by the Resettlement Section which recommends the resumption of the resettlement into Burkina Faso and Benin as of 2003 still makes no mention of refugee involvement in the design or implementation of activities. A factor which might have made the latter somewhat problematic is the preferential treatment granted to resettled refugees as opposed to those of first asylum. They were always treated as a group apart, and it is not easy to see how refugees of first asylum should have been willing to come forward to help integrate those who were receiving a much better deal than they had had themselves. This shows once more the potentially divisive consequences of giving one group of refugees more privileges than another.

UNHCR's continuing responsibility

106. The Pilot Project was, as the name indicates, an experiment aimed at exploring the feasibility of something that had not been attempted before. It is therefore not surprising that it exhibited the weaknesses characteristic of such ventures. The intentions were highly commendable, the staff involved did their best to make it succeed and many lessons have been learned. It was, moreover, successful to the extent that the refugees were indeed resettled in an environment where they are safe.

⁵⁴ See chapter on Pilot Project.

It is also the case, however, that majority of them are now facing a life of dire poverty. The anguish and distress they are experiencing as a result is made all the worse by their conviction that their current situation has not been brought about by their own choosing but by their having been made to participate in an experimental enterprise which was poorly conceived and likely to fail. Sadly, it cannot be denied that their perception of the situation corresponds to the facts.

107. This outcome has not been unexpected. When the project was first conceived many UNHCR staff members expressed doubts about the wisdom of resettling refugees in countries that were known to be poor and devoid of resources. In 2000, the Canadian integration consultant who was posted to Benin and Burkina Faso wrote in the conclusion to her mission report that 'the uncertainty over the end results of (the refugees') economic integration and the uncertainty concerning the prospects of vulnerable cases causes us to view the long-term viability of this project with some degree of alarm.'⁵⁵ Three years later, it must be said that these worries have been born out. If the primary concern of evaluations is 'the impact of UNHCR's work on the rights and welfare of refugees' the conclusion of this evaluation cannot but be that the impact of the Pilot Project has been seriously detrimental for two groups of refugees in particular: those who could have been resettled elsewhere, including in particular a considerable number of the refugees resettled from Tanzania; and those who would most probably not have been resettled to Benin and Burkina Faso if adequate selection criteria had been established. The latter include

- refugees who are not part of a group and have no pre-existing local community in the countries concerned (e.g. Sudanese, Somalis and Eritreans)
- refugees whose professional qualifications are not required in the countries concerned (e.g. petro-chemical engineering in Burkina Faso)
- elderly refugees, women heads of household and other vulnerable cases
- refugees with close family ties in traditional resettlement countries.

108. The failure of the Pilot Project to secure durable integration prospects for the majority of resettled refugees is rendered more complex by the fact that no contingency plan has been established to deal with such an eventuality. The UNHCR BO in Benin considers that the resettled refugees should, from now on, be treated no differently from refugees of first asylum. This means that they should not be assisted further except for basic health and one time emergency grants. This approach is sensible in that it thereby ends the discrimination between the two groups of refugees; it, however, implicitly absolves UNHCR of all residual responsibility for the refugees who include numerous children liable to face a lifetime of abject poverty as a result of decisions taken by UNHCR; if the Office had adopted a different policy such a situation would simply not have arisen. This evaluation therefore takes the view that UNHCR must accept a degree of continuing responsibility for the well being of these people.

109. In determining what this means in practise it is equally important, however, to point out that for a minority of resettled refugees, i.e. some 22% of the total, the Pilot

⁵⁵ Sylvie Moreau, *La Réinstallation et l'Intégration des Réfugiés au Bénin et au Burkina Faso*, Mars 2001, p.29.

Project did provide a durable solution. These include refugees who could not, or did not wish to be, resettled elsewhere, as well as those who did manage to integrate successfully for the reasons set out above. This shows that Burkina Faso and Benin can, indeed, play a positive role in the resettlement process, provided that adequate selection criteria are put in place. The two countries may also provide a temporary protection space for refugees who do not fit these criteria but need to leave their country of first asylum before a more suitable destination can be identified. The Governments of Benin and Burkina Faso are, moreover, prepared to continue receiving resettled refugees provided they are properly selected and genuinely willing to settle there. While this will always be a small minority there is no doubt that such cases exist.

Recommendations

110. Taking account of these various factors – the overall failure of the Pilot Project and its partial success, the continuing responsibility of UNHCR for the fate of the resettled as well as the severely limited potential of Benin and Burkina Faso as resettlement countries – this evaluation proposes a package of measures to address the current situation. They fall into two kinds: measures to be taken with immediate effect to mitigate the difficulties of the resettled refugees which should, if at all possible, be extended to all refugees in the two countries, and measures designed to improve the integration prospects of ALL refugees in the two countries so as to provide a more solid basis for any future resettlement initiatives. The latter takes account of the lessons learnt from the Pilot Project and approaches local integration primarily as a development issue, in line with the High Commissioner’s DLI initiative. It is the subject of the final section of this report.

1. Considering UNHCR’s continuing responsibility for the welfare of the refugees resettled under its auspices in Benin and Burkina Faso, the following measures should be undertaken by the Office and, if possible, extended to all refugees hosted in the two countries:

- a. **The children of destitute families should be provided with a monthly education grant, a measure of particular importance for families with many children; all school children should be also provided with school books, in addition to school uniforms and registration costs which are covered at present (US\$ 21,000 per annum for a total of 80 children of resettled refugees in both countries).**
- b. **Scholarships for resettled refugees who have not completed their studies should be reinstated at the full level until they have graduated.**
- c. **Elderly, sick, women heads of household, or otherwise unemployable refugees should be provided with a minimal level of monthly assistance to cater for their basic needs (US\$5,000 per annum for 10 persons).**
- d. **UNHCR and the local authorities should jointly devise a strategy to enhance the employment prospect of qualified resettled and first asylum refugees; this should include a special appeal to UNDP Offices concerned so as to promote the employment of qualified refugees as UNVs.**

- e. **Children of resettled refugees in Benin and Burkina Faso should be deemed eligible for DAFI scholarships on the same terms as other refugees and be kept informed of this opportunity.**

Action: West Africa Desk, Resettlement Section, RO Benin

111. The objective of this recommendation is to provide refugees in need with a minimal safety net, prevent families from falling into destitution and put the education, training and employment prospects of them and their children on a more secure footing.

2. A case-by-case review of the resettled refugees should be undertaken to determine who may qualify for secondary resettlement under criterion 4.9 of the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (refugees without local integration prospects for whom voluntary repatriation will not become an option in the foreseeable future).

Action: Resettlement Section, RO Benin

112. Cases to be considered under this recommendation above should include the chronically ill, single heads of households as well as those who despite proven efforts on their part, have not been able to establish themselves in a manner appropriate to their educational and employment backgrounds. Consideration should also be given to those among them who have had to depend on remittances from relatives in traditional resettlement countries; it is evidently very much in their interest that they should be reunited with these relatives in circumstances which will enable them to cater for their own needs rather be dependent on them for the foreseeable future. Opening the gate to secondary resettlement is evidently likely to be a highly divisive step, and the criteria to be applied have to be carefully thought through, well explained and strictly applied. It is, however, the only way to be fair to those refugees who find themselves in potentially permanent jeopardy as a result of decisions taken by UNHCR.

3. Taking account of the improved repatriation prospects in the Great Lakes Region, UNHCR should actively consider employing qualified refugees from the region who are currently in Benin and Burkina Faso to assist it in implementing the operation.

Action: Desk, Central Africa and Great Lakes Region

113. The evaluation found that there is a considerable reserve of underused talent and expertise among the refugees residing in Benin and Burkina Faso, both among the resettled and those of first asylum. There is no doubt that some of them would be very well placed to help UNHCR in organising and running the major repatriation operations which are currently being envisaged.

4. The Community Services Function in the UNHCR Regional Office in Benin should be strengthened through a) the urgent training of existing local UNHCR and implementing partners' staff, and their familiarisation with relevant UNHCR standards and policies, (including programme, reporting and basic budget training); b) the urgent identification and training of three refugee community workers and their employment by the implementing partner in both Benin and Burkina Faso under a newly created budget line; c) the deployment of an international Community Services Officer to supervise and monitor all activities in this sector.

Action: West Africa Desk, Health and Community Development Section, RO Benin

114. Considering the shortcomings witnessed in the community services sector as well as the urgent need for staff training and support there is no doubt that these measures would do much to ease the pressure on the Office, improve the services rendered and thus remove some of the tension which currently exists between refugees and project staff in Cotonou. The deployment of an international Community Services Officer would also enhance the ability of the Office to train, monitor and support implementing partners in the other countries covered by the Regional Office, notably Burkina Faso. As a matter of principle all training materials and manuals concerning the Community Services function should be made available in French.

5. Refugee resettlement to Benin and Burkina Faso should not be resumed until a comprehensive integration programme as outlined in recommendations 6-15 can be introduced; until such time only cases for whom there is no other solution should be moved to these countries for purpose of temporary protection.

Action: Resettlement Section

115. Both the governments of Benin and Burkina Faso appeared willing to continue receiving resettled refugees provided those selected were genuinely willing to establish themselves there. In the light of the circumstances encountered, however, this evaluation cannot recommend the resumption of the programme in the near future. The deteriorating economic situation especially in Burkina Faso also strongly militates against this course of action. Instead, efforts should be made to plan a solid integration programme in the longer term by applying the principles of the DLI approach to urban refugees in these countries. As outlined in the following pages, this is a complex and labour intensive process which is offset, however, by the potential benefits it may bring to all refugees in the countries concerned.

Resettlement to developing countries: lessons learnt and the way ahead

A high risk enterprise

116. The experience of the Resettlement Pilot Project in Burkina Faso and Benin shows that refugee resettlement to developing countries must be approached with great caution for a number of reasons. Chief among these are the following:

- the government concerned may not have the resources and experience to set up an integration programme which corresponds to standards such as those outlined in the International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration;
- in the absence of a qualified and well-resourced government counterpart UNHCR risks having to involve itself in a long-term integration programme which may, nevertheless, fail to secure an adequate degree of welfare and self-reliance for the refugees concerned;
- refugees may not be motivated to establish themselves in countries with low life expectancy, poor employment prospects and dysfunctional health and educational services; this may further diminish the chance of the programme to achieve its objectives;
- attempts to enhance the programme by providing resettled refugees with more support than those of first asylum are potentially divisive and may have little durable impact;
- programme failure risks exposing refugees and their children to a lifetime of destitution;
- in the event of failure, UNHCR rather than the government will be perceived by the refugees as being the party responsible and may face the obligation to take remedial measures which may require yet more resources;
- programme failure may lead to irregular movement as refugees decide to leave their resettlement country for other, potentially more promising destinations; in doing so refugees may expose themselves to serious risks;
- in the absence of true integration prospects, resettling refugees to developing countries may amount to no more than moving a protracted refugee situation from one territory to another.

117. It should be said in this context that UNHCR has also in previous decades experienced problems when organising resettlement to new and untried destinations. In the 1970s, attempts were made to resettle Hmong refugees from Thailand to China and Argentina. In both cases the refugees faced serious integration problems and UNHCR was obliged to engage in complex and costly efforts to rectify

the situation.⁵⁶ In the event, it appears that all those resettled to Argentina had to be moved to other countries. The difficulties more recently encountered with resettlement pilot projects organised in Chile and Brazil under the Trust Fund for Enhancing Resettlement Activities also go to indicate that such ventures have to be organised only after the most careful scrutiny. None of these resettlement destinations are, however, as poor as Benin and Burkina Faso, a fact which gives the lessons to be learnt from this Pilot Project an added measure of significance.

118. In this context it is not without interest to point out the interface between the role of rich countries as traditional resettlement destinations on the one hand, and the impact of their economic policies on poor countries such as Benin and Burkina Faso on the other. The prospect of economic growth in the latter is severely curtailed by the low world market price of their sole export commodity, cotton, which is brought about by the agricultural subsidies paid by the rich countries to their farmers, as noted above.⁵⁷ Refugees resettled to these rich countries assume a small but not insignificant role in the redistribution of global wealth by sending remittances back to friends and relatives left behind in countries of asylum and countries of origin. Refugees resettled in poor countries, however, are unlikely ever to be able to provide this kind of support; rather, they will have to depend on it themselves, like many of those resettled to Burkina Faso and Benin. Resettling refugees in developing countries is thus not only risky from a protection point of view, but also unwise from a macro-economic perspective since it does nothing to redress the global imbalance of wealth.

119. One of the justifications for resettling African refugees in African countries was the 'potential benefit' of the local population being 'ethnically, religiously and / or culturally more similar to the refugees.'⁵⁸ The experience of the Pilot Project shows that the reality is more complex than this argument appears to suggest. Somalis, Sudanese or Eritreans, for instance are likely to integrate more easily in London than Ouagadougou because the former harbours sizeable communities from these countries while in the latter they are likely to find themselves quite isolated. As also indicated above, the existence of community links is a determining factor in the integration process and it may well outweigh any general similarity between the local population and the refugees. The fact that multi-cultural communities have by now arisen in most traditional resettlement destinations makes these far more capable of absorbing refugees from distant shores than many countries which are, geographically and ethnically speaking, much nearer to their place of origin.

120. However, despite the potentially negative consequences listed above, resettlement to development countries should not be discounted altogether. The experience of Burkina Faso and Benin has shown that such resettlement has the potential to provide a durable solution to those refugees who cannot or do not want to be transferred to traditional resettlement countries, especially if they can fall back on the support of pre-existing communities of their own in their country of destination, or if the refugees form a closely knit group likely to engage in mutual support. In Benin, moreover, there seems to be a possibility to accommodate refugee farming communities since there is an abundance of underused land available.

⁵⁶ Personal communication from Raymond Hall, UNHCR Headquarters.

⁵⁷ See footnote 21; the United States of America, by far the most important traditional resettlement country, is also the most important source of rich-country farming subsidies.

⁵⁸ Jens Kofod, *Evaluation of UNHCR's Fund for Enhancing Resettlement Activities*, Geneva 2001, p.8.

Considering the above, the question arises how and under what circumstances the option of resettling refugees to developing countries should be resorted to, how its benefits can be maximised and the potential for failure be kept to a minimum. For this purpose it is recommended that this type of resettlement should only be countenanced if

- it includes a burden-sharing component whereby the donor community provides additional support to the country concerned in recognition of its readiness to accommodate resettled refugees; and
- it is linked to an integration programme benefiting all refugees in the country concerned by means of a strong development component as outlined in the High Commissioner's recent DLI (Development through Local Integration) initiative.

121. These two closely interlinked aspects are discussed further below, with a view to formulating a set of relevant recommendations which are set out at the end of this section.

A strategic approach to resettlement

122. The discussion paper referred to above defines the strategic use of resettlement as

‘the planned use of resettlement in a manner that maximises ... the benefits other than those received by the refugee being resettled. Those benefits may accrue to other refugees, the hosting state or the international protection regime in general.’⁵⁹

123. It is clear that when resettling refugees to developing countries the need for such secondary benefits is particularly acute. The main beneficiaries thereof should be the ‘other refugees’, namely the first asylum refugees who find themselves in the same country. Rather than being excluded from the integration programme established for the resettled as has been the case for Benin and Burkina Faso, they should benefit from it in equal measure since they face exactly the same problems and constraints. Using regional resettlement strategically therefore means first and foremost using it as a tool to enhance the integration prospects of ALL refugees in the country concerned. The extremely difficult conditions faced by many refugees in developing countries, no least on account of UNHCR's severally limited financial resources, makes such enhancement more than desirable.

124. The supplementary resources required to achieve this end should be presented to donors as their contribution to a burden sharing exercise based upon recognition of the hosting state's positive asylum and refugee policy – an indispensable precondition for any resettlement operation – as well as upon appreciation for its readiness to accommodate resettled refugees despite the limited resources at its disposal. The host state should therefore be the other recipient of the ‘strategic benefits’ to be obtained. The said discussion paper does indeed recommend the

⁵⁹ *The Strategic Use of Resettlement – A Discussion Paper Prepared by the Working Group on Resettlement (re. WGR/03/04Rev3)*, para. 6.

provision of international multilateral or bilateral financial assistance 'when resettlement is to a developing country.' However, it foresees this only 'to offset some of the initial arrival costs' and hence presents it as a short-term measure targeted exclusively at the resettled caseload. The lessons of Benin and Burkina Faso have shown, however, that the key problem in such resettlement is the long-term integration programme which can, moreover, not be conducted without taking into account the country's refugees situation as a whole. This shows that in this particular case local integration and resettlement, two durable solutions normally distinguished from each other, de facto overlap and require identical long-term commitments on the part of UNHCR, the host government and the donor community.

125. An integration programme in a developing country is, moreover, by definition a developmental challenge which can only succeed with the help of the type of measures envisaged in the DLI (Development through Local Integration) initiative adopted by the High Commissioner. The latter is part of a 'Convention Plus' approach whose principal aim is the development of multilateral 'special agreements' to complement the 1951 Convention. It foresees the provision of development assistance 'to achieve more equitable burden-sharing and to promote self-reliance of refugees and returnees in

- countries hosting large numbers of refugees;
- countries of origin in the context of reintegration; and
- refugee-hosting communities facilitating local integration in remote areas'.⁶⁰

126. To make this approach applicable to the type of integration challenge faced in Benin and Burkina Faso it should be extended to include refugee-hosting communities not only in 'remote areas' but also in urban areas and, most notably, in the capital cities where most urban refugees are usually to be found and where resettled refugees are most likely to establish themselves. The term Convention Plus remains highly pertinent thereby because such additional development oriented assistance will only be made available to those countries whose implementation of the 1951 Convention is such that the legal dimension of local integration is fully assured and they are therefore deemed to be suitable resettlement destinations for refugees. In addition, it must be stated that there is no reason to exclude urban refugees in developing countries from the benefits of a Convention Plus approach. Many live in extremely precarious circumstances, and the possibility of extending Convention Plus specifically to urban situations should be reviewed in the context of UNHCR's revised policy on urban refugees.⁶¹

127. Exploratory discussions how such an approach would work in practice have been conducted with a number of interlocutors during the evaluation mission, most notably donor representatives, government counterparts and UNDP staff. In this respect it was clear from the outset that development projects targeted specifically at urban refugees are neither feasible nor desirable. Instead, such a programme would

⁶⁰ *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*, Core Group on Durable Solutions, UNHCR, Geneva, 2003, p3.

⁶¹ The draft document *Protection, solutions and assistance for refugees in urban areas – guiding principles and good practice* (Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, July 2003) refers only in passing to the input of 'development-oriented agencies' (see p.15).

principally take the form of **compensation arrangements** within the overall framework of the poverty alleviation strategy negotiated by the country concerned. This formula has the advantage that it is flexible enough to be applied also to situations involving small numbers of refugees such as the Pilot Project. Donors would provide additional inputs into specified sectors of the strategy in return for government initiatives aimed at facilitating the integration of refugees. The latter might include

- the provision of shelter for refugees (plots of lands, cheap but adequate housing, preferential mortgages rates, etc.);
- the provision of quotas for refugee employment in designated sectors; and
- the inclusion of refugees in bilaterally funded training and job creation schemes.⁶²

128. The objective of the scheme is not only to facilitate refugee integration but also to channel benefits to the hosting state in such a way as to bring it and its population tangible rewards for a generous asylum policy. A essential precondition for this scheme to work, however, is that the resettled refugees should be selected upon the basis of criteria that take into account their integration potential and their willingness to remain in the country concerned and hence their potential to become an asset to their new environment. The number of refugees who fulfil such criteria is likely to be limited, certainly in the initial stages. This does not, however, in any way diminish the need for, or relevance of, such an approach since its principal aim is to improve the integration prospects of all refugees in the country concerned. Only then does an adequate basis for a resettlement programme exist.

129. The following section contains a set of recommendations on how such a programmes could be put into practice, with illustrative reference to the situation in Benin and Burkina Faso. The recommendations take account of the lessons learnt from the Pilot Project and include certain principles of the DLI approach, in particular the stages of implementation as detailed in the above cited document *Framework for Durable Solutions*.⁶³ Reference is also made to UNHCR's response to the recent evaluations concerning refugee women, refugee children and the community services function since a number of recommendations made in these documents tally those proposed hereunder.

Recommendations

6. Clear criteria should be established to select developing countries suitable for emerging resettlement whereby equal weight should be given to legal protection and socio-economic factors; the latter should take account of the principles established in the International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration.

Action: Resettlement Section

⁶² It has to be said that since budget aid appears to be increasingly replacing project aid, schemes of this nature may become a rarity.

⁶³ See pages 25-26.

130. As noted above, Benin and Burkina Faso were selected as emerging resettlement countries principally on the basis of protection related criteria: neither was refugee producing, and both had signed and implemented the international legal instruments concerning refugees; their socio-economic integration prospects, however, were not examined in any detail. The experience of the Pilot Project has shown that considering the economic difficulties faced by developing countries close attention must be given to this issue whereby the International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration can serve as a useful resource. As stated by the latter, the following key factors have to be taken into account when selecting suitable placements for resettled refugees:

- availability of secure and affordable housing;
- access to employment opportunities;
- presence of appropriate cultural and religious support;
- commitment of community participation;
- sufficient infrastructural capacity ;
- availability of key resettlement services (e.g. medical care, employment counselling, services for survivors of trauma or torture);
- partnership potential through NGOs, local service agencies, civic or religious organisations;
- attitude and environment (i.e. extent to which the community exhibits and openness to strangers and a respect for cultural and religious diversity).⁶⁴

131. Of equal importance is the capacity of the receiving country to establish a sound integration programme which, according to the Handbook, should

- be clearly planned, with clear guidelines for assessment and ongoing monitoring of refugee communities;
- incorporate ways to engage refugees in decision making;
- be flexible to changing domestic and external factors;
- have a range of placement options taking account of the needs of different groups of refugees; and
- undertake advance assessment and preparation of placement communities.⁶⁵

Lack of resources and limited governmental infrastructure mean that developing countries cannot, as a rule, be expected to design and implement a sophisticated integration programme. In these circumstances, UNHCR must be

⁶⁴ See *Refugee Resettlement – An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2002, p.61.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.67.

prepared to involve itself in the process to the extent and for the duration required, otherwise the programme should not be attempted.

7. Resettlement to developing countries should be only be undertaken if it can be used strategically by attracting additional donor support in order to enhance the integration prospects of ALL refugees in the country concerned.

Action: UNHCR

132. The idea of providing such supplementary donor input, both bilateral and multilateral, was favourably received by donor representatives in Benin and Burkina Faso with whom this matter was raised. The Danish mission in Ouagadougou seemed particularly receptive to the idea. Enabling refugees to integrate better in developing countries and thus reducing the incentive for onward or 'irregular' movement is, moreover, an objective likely to be favoured by donor countries at the present time.

133. The proposal also aligns itself with the recommendation to 'develop capacity building programmes with new resettlement countries involving training as well as 'twinning' and related support' stated in the Agenda for Protection (Goal 5, Objective 5), but it goes much further than that since it takes into account the integration needs of all refugees in the country. Considering the situation encountered in Benin and Burkina Faso this is unavoidable as many first asylum refugees live in abject poverty and the assistance UNHCR is able to provide for them is minimal. In Benin in particular a more solid local integration programme for refugees in that country would seem to be a dire necessity, especially since the cessation of food distribution in the refugee camp of Kpomassè. Had such a programme been in place the demonstrations organised by refugees outside the UNHCR Office in Cotonou during May and June 2003 might not have been as virulent or disruptive.

8. Since resettlement to developing countries is primarily an integration challenge assistance programmes to this end should be designed within the framework of UNHCR's DLI (Development through Local Integration) initiative, incorporated where possible into Convention Plus agreements, and planned as well as monitored by administrative units professionally concerned with integration programmes; for this purpose the DLI approach should be made applicable also to urban refugees.

Action: UNHCR

134. The Benin/Burkina Faso Pilot Project was primarily administered by the Resettlement Section in UNHCR Headquarters. However, resettlement staff in Headquarters should not be expected to design and run what is de facto an integration programme in the field. Overall responsibility for such programmes should be assigned to a specialised unit such as the Reintegration and Local Settlement Section while at field level they should not be treated as separate entities like the Pilot Project but instead be fully integrated into the ongoing country programme since all refugees are intended to benefit equally. This recommendation implies, furthermore, that the DLI strategy and the Convention Plus approach be extended to cover also the needs of urban refugees in developing countries since resettled refugees are most likely to be accommodated in urban settings.

9. In view of the high risk of failure, resettlement programmes to developing countries must be based upon a detailed feasibility study which should aim to

examine integration prospects, establish appropriate selection criteria for refugees as well as draw up relevant information and orientation materials for refugees and UNHCR staff involved in the resettlement process; refugees must be fully and accurately informed of conditions and declare themselves ready to proceed on that basis.

135. As mentioned above, the lack of these initiatives was among the key weaknesses of the Pilot Project. In this context it is worth noting that earlier evaluations have remarked upon the need for a UNHCR situation analysis tool to provide the basis for field level planning and programming and that this appears now to be in the process of being designed.⁶⁶ In developing this tool its possible use in planning such a resettlement programme should be taken into account. For planning purposes reference could also be made to the socio-economic surveys on poverty related issues routinely undertaken as part of Poverty Alleviation Strategies. It would clearly be in UNHCR's interest that such surveys should be made to develop a full and detailed understanding of the situation of refugees in the countries concerned.

136. As far as selection criteria are concerned, the experience of the Pilot Project has shown that the refugees most likely to integrate are those who can rely on support from a pre-existing community of their own in the resettlement country as well as those who arrive as integrated communities willing and able to support each other. Particular attention should be given to selecting refugees with skills needed in the resettlement country on the understanding that the host government will undertake the necessary steps to facilitate their employment.

10. In order to facilitate access to development funding, resettlement-cum-integration programmes in the countries concerned should be incorporated into Poverty Reduction Strategies and designed to attract bilateral funding in the longer term; donors should be encouraged to provide additional input into designated segments of the strategy to compensate for governmental measures aimed at facilitating the socio-economic integration of refugees, particularly in the employment sector.

137. The Poverty Reduction Strategies currently being negotiated with donors and the World Bank in Burkina Faso and Benin make no mention of refugees. Exploratory discussions with diplomatic missions and government counterparts indicate, however, that some donors are in principle ready to provide additional input into designated sectors of such strategies to compensate for governmental measures taken to provide enhanced employment opportunities for refugees. A concrete example discussed in Burkina Faso concerned the possibility of quotas to be set aside for refugee teachers in return for additional donor support granted to the education sector of the poverty alleviation strategy; this could be envisaged as there is a shortage of teachers in the country and some refugees clearly have the necessary qualifications for the purpose. In the present circumstances refugee employment in the public sector is, however, virtually impossible to attain. If such a programme is set up it might also include teacher-training component for refugees in the sectors where shortages exist.

⁶⁶ See *UNHCR Response to the Three Evaluations*, p.10.

138. Donors also appeared ready to include refugee beneficiaries in project aid schemes currently under bilateral negotiation. Specific examples discussed in Benin concerned a multi-year training and job creation programme implemented by GTZ⁶⁷ as well as a small business management programme planned by the EU Commission, both of which could also benefit refugees. Generally, UNHCR should aim to go beyond the very limited number of actors engaged in the Pilot Project by seeking the participation of the many government departments, NGOs and donors who are actively involved in the long-term development strategies. The need for UNHCR to generate a more expanded partnership base has also been stressed in the recent evaluations mentioned above.⁶⁸

139. Concerning Poverty Evaluation Strategies, a general point of note is that their implementation lays great emphasis on the concept of 'good governance'. UNHCR may wish to investigate to what extent a positive asylum and refugee policy and a respect for the principles of international protection form part of the good governance concept. If so, this would give the Office an added reason to associate itself more closely with the elaboration of these strategies and to ensure that the needs of refugees are integrated in the overall plan.

11. Resettlement/integration programmes with a development component must be primarily negotiated in the field, require a long-term, multi-year planning horizon and active governmental support; a strong and continuous UNHCR field presence is indispensable if this process is to maintain momentum and succeed; UNHCR staff involved should be given training so as to become familiar with the working practices of key actors in the development field.

140. As is well known, development programmes are normally subject to a multi-year planning and implementation cycle and the incorporation of a refugee assistance dimension into such a cycle will inevitably require time. The developmental dimension of the refugee integration programme here envisaged may require a minimum of two years to be initiated during which time the government must be seen to be taking the lead. This will not happen without a strong and continuous advocacy role on the part of UNHCR and requires staff well versed in the development field and able to motivate government counterparts and donor representatives to engage in a new and untried venture.

141. In the case of the Pilot Project lack of field staff and staffing continuity may have hindered UNHCR's monitoring role. The UNHCR Office in Burkina Faso was about to close when the Project was set up and the Benin Office was for some time headed by a succession of Liaison Officers on mission. The staffing situation in Benin improved since January 2002 when Cotonou made into a Regional Office but even then it appeared that staff resources are fully consumed by attending to pressing day-to-day matters and little time is left to engage in the long and complex negotiations required to secure partnerships in the development field. The operations plan for 2004 mentions that UNHCR is involved in implementation of the UNDAF plan in Benin⁶⁹ but there appeared to be little tangible evidence of progress in the

⁶⁷ The GTZ training programme concerned is a multi-year project which is currently being planned. If a refugee quota can be incorporated into future training cycles (i.e. 2005-7) German government funding could be solicited in order to offset the costs involved.

⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, p.11.

⁶⁹ *Plan des operations par pays 2004, Bénin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo*, p.3.

field. Moreover, the new Poverty Alleviation Strategy Documents for both Benin and Burkina Faso were being elaborated just at the time the evaluation mission took place but UNHCR seems not have participated in this process in any way.⁷⁰

142. The impression is unavoidable that UNHCR has to give a higher degree of priority to involving itself in development initiatives of this nature at field level so as to widen its partnership base and establish the network necessary for an initiative such as DLI to take hold. This also requires training initiatives to help UNHCR staff familiarise themselves more with the working practises and jargon of key actors in the development field, in particular UNDP, the World Bank, the European Union and USAID. Only in this way can UNHCR staff perform the much invoked 'catalytic role' to secure development funding for the benefit of refugees.

12. The programme must be put on strong institutional foundations through a) the establishment of a multi-year monitoring and evaluation procedure involving all key actors; and b) regular consultations with interested NGO and civil society partners; and c) secondment of experts from other countries with similar experience (South-South model).

Action: Host government, UNHCR, NGOs and donors.

143. For the purpose of the monitoring and evaluation procedure, a three-pronged approach is recommended:

- an inter-ministerial committee should be set up by the host government and meet on a regular basis for planning and evaluation purposes; the main aim here is to ensure the active involvement and support of line ministries associated with the development process (Ministry of Planning, Labour etc.); the committee should also include concerned local NGOs and civil society representatives involved in planning, implementing and monitoring the project, with a view to preparing the ground for full in-country ownership of the programme in the longer term.
- an in-country round table for donors should be convened on an annual basis to monitor the project and take corrective action. In the case of the Pilot Project such round tables were convened only at the beginning (in 1999); thereafter the momentum was lost and the project disappeared from view as far as local donor representatives are concerned;
- an annual beneficiary based evaluation should be conducted by UNHCR in order to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of the assistance measures of the project and their impact on the lives of the refugees; in the case of the Pilot Project, evaluations concentrated primarily on issues of policy and procedure and the actual situation of the refugees was not addressed in any detail.

⁷⁰ According to UNDP Ouagadougou, a major Round Table on development is planned in Burkina Faso in December 2003 in connection with the issue of the new Poverty Allevation document.

144. Assistance and expert advice during the implementation stage may also be obtained through the secondment of staff with refugee integration experience from other countries. Preference should thereby be given to staff from countries where refugees find themselves in conditions comparable to those of the emerging resettlement country concerned. The experience of staff from Central and Eastern Europe may be of particular value in this respect since they have recently had to establish new refugee support structures, with limited resources and institutional constraints not unlike those found in some developing countries.

13. Refugees should be directly involved and employed in the planning and implementation of the project.

145. It is well known that former refugees and refugee community organisations play a vital and institutionalised role in facilitating the reception and orientation of refugees in developed countries. In the case of the Pilot Project, however, such a role was not foreseen at any stage in the planning or implementation process. When planning future projects of this kind qualified refugees should be identified, trained, and, if possible, encouraged to set up an NGO that may serve as implementing partner for reception and orientation purposes.

14. The community services sector is likely to play a key role in facilitating the integration of refugees; implementing partners in this sector therefore need to be adequately staffed, well trained and professionally supervised.

Action: UNHCR (in particular Health and Community Development Section) and host government)

146. Counsellors represent the human face of a refugee assistance programme and their role is therefore crucial to its success. Several recent evaluation reports have pointed out the need to increase the number and strengthen the profile of community services offers and to prioritise the establishment of training programmes for community services staff. UNHCR has, moreover, recognised that the gradual reduction of community services officers posts in recent years has weakened its programme delivery and that such posts should be reinstated in the near future to the extent possible.⁷¹

147. As pointed out above, in the case of the Pilot Project the weakness of the community services sector, especially in Benin, had a seriously detrimental effect. Inadequate staffing levels, lack of training, ignorance of basic UNHCR standards and policies as well as contradictory information on assistance entitlements issued by different actors contributed much to the creation of an acrimonious atmosphere in which refugees and project staff perceived each other as adversaries rather than partners; these factors are also largely responsible for the failure of the micro-credit schemes.

15. The needs-based protection planning and capacity building project recently submitted for funding to the European Union should be utilised to design a comprehensive DLI programme for urban refugees in Benin and Burkina Faso along the lines proposed in recommendations 6-14 above.

Action: UNHCR (Department of International Protection, West Africa Desk)

⁷¹ See UNHCR Response to the Three Evaluations, p.6-8.

148. The project entitled 'Needs-based protection planning as a precursor to targeting capacity building initiatives in selected African countries'⁷² is scheduled to include an 'in-depth assessment of the integration level of refugees and a feasibility study on opportunities for self-reliance.' Target countries selected for the exercise are Benin, Burkina Faso, Kenya and Tanzania. If funded, the project would provide an excellent opportunity to engage in the planning process recommended above, with the aim of designing and funding a comprehensive integration programme in Benin and Burkina Faso which draws on developmental strategies and offers improved prospects to all refugees, those of first asylum and the resettled.

⁷² See undated UNHCR position paper with this title (issued in autumn 2003).

Annex A. Terms of Reference

Evaluation of the resettlement programmes established in two emerging resettlement countries: Benin and Burkina Faso

Background

Following the establishment of the Working Group on Resettlement in 1995, UNHCR was requested by the Nordic countries to identify alternatives which would ensure the resettlement of more refugees and especially to diversify resettlement opportunities available to refugees. A Trust Fund was created, financed by the Nordic countries, for the achievement of these objectives and particular focus was put on the need to diversify resettlement opportunities.

In line with above, UNHCR initiated consultations with various governments and concluded agreements with six emerging resettlement countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chile, Brazil, Ireland and Iceland) to start pilot resettlement programmes.

Burkina Faso and Benin's overall political stability and the effective incorporation of international conventions' provisions relating to the status of refugees into their national legislation, as well as both Governments' willingness to offer resettlement opportunities to refugees contributed to the establishment of resettlement pilot programmes in these two countries, which were eventually launched in 1998. The implementation of the respective programmes was made possible by contributions from the UNHCR Trust Fund for Resettlement. The Governments of Burkina Faso and of Benin made available to UNHCR 200 and 240 places respectively for an initial period of two years.

The relevance of the resettlement programmes in the emerging countries has been reinforced recently by the High Commissioner's focus on expanding resettlement as a tool of protection and as a durable solution. The Agenda for Protection reiterates the concept by calling on UNHCR "to work to expand the number of countries engaged in resettlement" and "to develop capacity-building programmes with new resettlement countries, involving training, as well as "twinning" and related support". The evaluation is expected to provide a systematic and empirically-supported analysis of the work of UNHCR, governments and operational partners in the emerging resettlement countries, specifically, in Benin and Burkina Faso, and to what a degree the objectives of the resettlement programmes have been met. It should include specific recommendations as to how to strengthen and improve the programmes. In particular, the evaluation will:

1. Outline the historical context and the protection environment which brought about UNHCR's decision to seek to engage new countries in resettlement policies and in negotiating with these the establishment of resettlement programmes.

2. Identify the specificity of Benin and Burkina Faso as resettlement countries in comparison with the “traditional” resettlement countries.
3. Outline UNHCR’s management structure and responsibilities in terms of monitoring the implementation of the programmes during the period 1998-2002, both at Headquarters and at country level.
4. Identify possible gaps and weaknesses in the management systems and procedures which may have impacted on the regular implementation of the programmes.
5. Analyze the profiles of the resettled refugees and assess to what an extent resettled refugees have attained self-sufficiency and eventual local integration, and identify what factors have (or have not) facilitated the achievement of this goal.
6. Assess to what an extent the legal, material, and socio-economic conditions surrounding the resettled refugees differ from those of other recognized refugees and asylum seekers , and how such differences may have impacted upon the level of assistance, the treatment and the relations between the different categories of refugees.
7. Assess how the programmes aimed at the integration of resettled refugees can be aligned with the assistance provided and the efforts being made for the local integration of other refugees present in the countries.
8. Make recommendations concerning the future orientation of the UNHCR programmes to assist resettled refugees in attaining self-sufficiency and local integration, in the *short, medium* and *long* term. These should include actions required by the governments, UNHCR , implementing partners and refugees.
9. Make recommendations concerning the design and establishment of similar programmes in other emerging resettlement countries

Methodology

The evaluation team will aim to begin its work immediately, for a duration of 6-8 weeks .

The evaluation will be undertaken by a team of two persons, comprising one expert who is conversant with overall refugee and resettlement issues, and one expert in integration issues. Both experts have proven skills and experience in issues relating to resettlement. The evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with UNHCR’s evaluation policy. It will, therefore, involve extensive consultation with refugees (both resettled and recognized refugees in respective countries) and other stakeholders.

The evaluation will be guided by a Steering Committee consisting of key stakeholders within UNHCR (Resettlement Section, the Desk covering these countries and EPAU), and chaired by the Head of Resettlement Section. The Steering

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Committee will approve the terms of reference for the review, approve the selection of an evaluation team, monitor the progress of the project and ensure that its findings and recommendations are effectively utilized.

The evaluation team will undertake interviews and research at UNHCR's Geneva Headquarters and will undertake missions to Benin and Burkina Faso.

The report of this evaluation project will be placed in the public domain. UNHCR will not exercise any editorial control over the report but will provide comments on the draft and will proofread and format the report prior to publication. UNHCR reserves the right to publish a response to the report and to attach it as an annex to the report. The team may be asked to provide an interim and/or final briefing in Geneva on the findings, recommendations and methodology of the evaluation project.

After the completion of the project, the team will be asked to prepare a brief 'lessons learned' report, analyzing the way in which the evaluation was managed and undertaken. This report will be used to enhance UNHCR's evaluation procedures and methods.

Following the completion of the evaluation report, the Department of International Protection will prepare a management response to the review, explaining how its findings and recommendations will be utilized. The Steering Committee for the project will also be asked to make recommendations in this respect. The findings and recommendations of the project may be used as a basis for national or regional workshops, briefings to donor states, the Executive Committee and NGOs, and for training purposes.

Annex B. Persons met

UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva

Thierno Oumar Bah	Head of Desk for West and Central Africa
Myriam Baele	Resettlement Officer
Monique Bamu-Ekoko	Senior Resettlement Officer
Justine Brun	Programme Officer, Resettlement Section
Anita Bundegaard	Special Advisor on External Relations
Jeff Crisp	Head, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit
Loan Tuyet Dam	Senior Desk Officer, Desk for West and Central Africa
Eva Demant	Chief, Resettlement Section
Khassim Diagne	Senior Policy Research Officer, Africa Bureau
Jean-François Durieux	Head, Convention Plus Unit
Erika Feller	Director, Department of International Protection
Michel Gaudé	Representative, UNHCR RO Cotonou
Raymond Hall	Head, Europe Bureau
Niels Harild	Chief, Reintegration and Local Settlement Section
Arjun Jain	Training Officer
Joyce Mends-Cole	Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women
Kamel Morjane	Assistant High Commissioner
Shelly Pitterman	Head, Human Resources Section
Christiane Sartre	Senior Resettlement Assistant
Louis Varese	Senior Desk Officer, Americas Bureau
Jean-Noel Wetterwald	Head, Donor Relations Section
Nyorovai Whande	Senior Community Services Officer
Alemtsehai Zeleke	Community Services Officer

Benin

André Daniel Agueh,	Coordinateur, CARITAS
Angelita Cecere,	Acting Representative, UNHCR RO Cotonou
Maureen J. Dowds,	Right to Play
Mohamadou El Habib,	Représentant de la FAO
Jörg Hahmann,	Conseiller Technique, GTZ
Karim Jabbar,	Chargé de Programme, Délégation de la Commission Européenne
Aldric Koja,	Conseiller Juridique, CNAR

RESETTLEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Damien S. Monnou,	Administrateur Civil, Ministère de l'Intérieur
Cécile Muller,	Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès
Wayne E. Neil,	Ambassadeur des Etats Unis
Franco Nulli,	Ambassadeur, Union Européenne
Alain Peters,	African Refugee Foundation
Stephan Röken,	Conseiller, Ambassade d'Allemagne
Sonia van Nispen tot Sevenaer,	Chef de Poste Adjointe, Ambassade des Pays-Bas
Katherine M. Shamraj,	UNHCR Intern

Home visits to 31 refugee households (25 resettled and 6 first asylum)

Burkina Faso

Elisabeth Bailey,	Deuxième Secrétaire, Ambassade des Etats Unis
Paul Bonnefoy,	Conseiller économique, Délégation de la Commission Européenne
Jacques Gérard,	Conseiller, Ambassade de France
J. Anthony Holmes,	Ambassadeur des Etats Unis
Joseph Kienon,	Chef du Projet CREDO-HCR
Christian Lemaire,	Représentant Résident, PNUD
Moise Napon,	Secrétaire Général, CREDO
Daouda Sawadogo,	Fédération des Caisses Populaires du Burkina (FCPB)
Laurentin Somda,	Coordinateur, CONAREF
Flemming West,	Premier Conseiller, Ambassade de Danemark
Antonio Garcia Velázquez,	Ambassadeur, Union Européenne
Koté Zakalia,	Directeur de Cabinet, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères

Home visits to 20 refugee households (12 resettled and 8 first asylum)

Annex C. Refugees resettled to Benin & Burkina Faso

BENIN

1999			
April	Rwanda		1/1*
June	Rwanda		3/11
	RDC		1/1
July	Sudan		2/7
August	Uganda		1/1
September	Burundi		2/3
November	Sierra Leone		1/1
2000			
March	RDC		1/6
April	Equatorial Guinea		4/4*
May	Burundi		1/3
June	Algeria		1/1
July	Equatorial Guinea		-/3 FR
August	Tchad		1/1*
November	Equatorial Guinea		-/4 FR
December	Tchad		3/3
	Tchad		-/23 FR
	RDC		1/5
	Rwanda		-/1 FR
2001			
May	RDC		3/16
June	RDC		2/17
	Burundi		5/18
	RDC		2/10**
	Rwanda		-/1
TOTAL			35/141

BURKINA FASO

1998			
June	Burundi		5/23
	Rwanda		1/8
August	Tchad		1/1
November	RDC		1/1
December	RDC		2/3
1999			
March	Sudan		1/1
April	Eritrea		1/1*
June	Burundi		1/3
	Somalia		1/1
	RDC		3/4*
July	RDC		1/1
	Rwanda		1/1
August	Eritrea		-/4 FR
September	Rwanda		2/3
2000			
January	Sudan		1/5
February	RDC		-/2 FR
April	RDC		3/10
TOTAL			25/72

BURKINA FASO		
Burundi		6/26
Eritrea		1/5
RDC		10/21
Rwanda		4/12
Somalia		1/1
Sudan		2/6
Tchad		1/1
TOTAL		25/72

RESETTLEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

BENIN	
Algeria	1/1
Burundi	8/24
Equatorial Guinea	4/11
RDC	10/55
Rwanda	4/14
Sierra Leone	1/1
Sudan	2/7
Tchad	4/27
Uganda	1/1
TOTAL	35/141

* plus subsequent Family Reunification -/xx

** plus spouse from Rwanda in one family

Annex D. Refugees resettled from Benin and Burkina Faso

BENIN

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
BDI				1	41		
CHD			10				
CMR	7				3		
COB					5		
COD					789		
ETH				6			
NIG	78	29	314	317	64		
RWA			7		59		
SUD				4	1		
TOG	14	63	1	43	595		
ZRE		1		2	10		
	99	93	332	373	1567	184	44

BURKINA FASO

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
BDI		12	15				
CHD		23	33	6			
CMR		10	11	2			
GHA		3					
ICO			1		4		
IRN			4				
MAU			2				
NIG		1					
RWA		24	11				
SUD			1				
TOG		9	12				
ZRE		2					
	0	84	90	8	4	0	0

Annex E. Refugee statistics by country of origin, 1998 - 2003

BENIN	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Jun-03
ALGERIE								7	7	7	7	7
ANGOLA								1	3	3	3	3
BURUNDI								95	111	132	134	138
BURKINA FASO								6	9	8	8	8
BOSNIE										3	3	3
REP. CENTRAFRICAINE								2	6	33	52	58
TCHAD								239	369	427	455	461
CAMEROUN								48	51	52	54	54
CONGO BRAZZAVILLE								383	1,238	1,241	1,243	1,246
CONGO DEMOCRATIQUE								163	674	811	872	877
COMORES									1	1	2	2
CUBA									1	1	2	2
GUINEE EQUATORIAL									10	11	13	13
ETHIOPIE								11	15	14	16	16
GHANA											1	1
GUINEE BISSAU									2	3	3	3
GUINEE									4	9	9	9
COTE D'IVOIRE									1	1	18	60
IRAQ									4	4	7	7
LIBERIA									2	2	6	6
NIGER								1	2	2	2	2
NIGERIA								190	205	229	250	249
OMAN										2	2	2
RWANDA								457	513	576	593	595
SIERRA LEONE								1	3	4	5	5
SOMALIE									2	2	2	2
SOUDAN								10	28	32	47	49
SYRIE									1	1	1	1
TOGO								1,305	1,029	1,182	1,205	1,208
OUGANDA								5	5	5	5	5
ZAMBIE										1	1	1
AUTRES A RISQUE								733				
TOTAL	300	156,200	70,400	23,800	6,000	2,900	2,900	3,657	4,296	4,799	5,021	5,093

RESETTLEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

BURKINA FASO	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001 *	2002	Jun-03
ALGERIE								5	5			
ANGOLA								2	2			
BURUNDI								49	50	63	63	68
BENIN								1	1			
REP. CENTRAFRICAINE								4	4	1	1	1
TCHAD								100	103	144	144	145
CAMEROUN								12	14	5	5	5
CONGO BRAZZAVILLE								94	96	71	71	83
CONGO DEMOCRATIQUE								26	39	28	28	28
ERITREE								5	5	5	5	5
GHANA								10	9	1	1	1
GUINEE								5	5	1	1	1
COTE D'IVOIRE									1	1	1	1
IRAN								14	14			
LIBERIA								12	12			
MAURITANIA								10	10			
MALI								8	8	3	3	3
NIGER								1	1			
NIGERIA								52	52			
RWANDA								184	180	96	96	96
SRI LANKA								1	1			
SOMALIE								1	1			
SOUDAN								6	11	6	6	6
TOGO								70	69	29	29	29
VIETNAM								3	3	3	3	3
TOTAL	5,700	6,600	50,000	29,800	28,400	1,800	600	675	696	457	457	475

Note: Fin 2000 - debut 2001 il y a eu un enregistrement des refugies vivant toujours au Burkina Faso

Annex F. Summary table of pilot project expenditure

Resettlement Project VAR/550 – Benin, expenditure

Sector	1998 Sub-project			1999 Sub-project			2000 Sub-project		
	(h) CARITAS	(h2) CNAR	(s) HCR-BEN	(h) CARITAS	(h2) CNAR	(s) HCR-BEN	(h) CARITAS	(h2) CNAR	(s) HCR-BEN
B. Transport							543,000		10,000
C. Domestic Needs/ Household Support				3,853,953			13,996,260		
F. Health/Nutrition					5,996,124			14,342,941	
G. Shelter/Other infrastructure				4,159,998			13,962,860		
H. Community Services				2,374,303			3,049,900		
I. Education				1,630,650		209,400	2,533,732		1,227,208
N. Income-Generation							13,199,695		
O. Legal Assistance/Protection		1,125,000		2,154,340	4,591,599	258,569		5,623,100	6,629,479
P. Agency Operational Support	2,668,800	2,725,388		9,853,369	11,722,181		6,929,673	8,214,661	
TOTAL CFAF	2,668,800	3,850,388	0	24,026,613	22,309,904	467,969	54,215,120	28,180,702	7,866,687
EQUIVALENT US\$	4,448	6,417	0	37,551	35,479	763	74,779	39,689	10,515

RESETTLEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Resettlement Project VAR/550 - Benin, expenditure

Sector	2001 Sub-project			2002 Sub-project			2003 Sub-project		
	(h) CARITAS	(h2) CNAR	(s) HCR-BEN	(h) CARITAS	(h2) CNAR	(s) HCR-BEN	(g) CPPS	(h) CARITAS	(h2) CNAR
B. Transport	1,500,042			0					
C. Domestic Needs/ Household Support	25,602,265			16,393,765				2,019,750	
F. Health/Nutrition		11,341,325			12,077,020				261,580
G. Shelter/Other infrastructure	26,246,607			13,358,850					
H. Community Services	3,387,625	800,000		3,294,400				200,000	
I. Education	7,921,415		1,613,390	9,652,400		1,467,000	362,000		
N. Income-Generation	9,140,345			25,231,390			180,000		
O. Legal Assistance/Protection		4,667,750	251,750		1,737,800				1,161,000
P. Agency Operational Support	7,077,273	9,320,096		7,597,668	8,772,247		160,000	511,000	648,120
TOTAL CFAF	80,875,571	26,129,171	1,865,140	75,528,473	22,587,067	1,467,000	702,000	2,730,750	2,070,700
EQUIVALENT US\$	109,960	35,662	2,516	103,594	31,262	2,156	1,150	4,472	3,391

ANNEX F

Resettlement Project VAR/550 – Burkina Faso, expenditure

Sector	2001 Sub-project		2002 Sub-project			2003 Sub-project		
	(i) CONAREF	(t) HCR- BKF	(i) CONAREF	(i2 RCPB	(t) HCR- BKF	(i) CONAREF	(j) CREDO	
B. Transport	910,849		0			12,500		
C. Domestic Needs/Household Support	14,011,991		8,675,601				65,000	
F. Health/Nutrition	10,910,596		7,184,881			471,724	110,143	
G. Shelter/Other infrastructure	8,737,650		4,068,000					
H. Community Services	2,735,849	150,000	4,979,455			704,080		
I. Education	13,649,377		6,200,101			150,000		
N. Income-Generation	2,672,584		9,385,000				530,000	
O. Legal Assistance/Protection	5,879,673	2,754,080	4,601,911			1,186,594		
P. Agency Operational Support	25,048,635		30,061,046			5,984,300	30,000	
TOTAL	CFAF	84,557,203	2,904,080	75,155,995	0	0	8,509,198	735,143
EQUIVALENT	US\$	114,773	3,990	103,418	0	0	13,934	1,204

RESETTLEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Resettlement Project VAR/550 – Burkina Faso, expenditure

Sector	2001 Sub-project		2002 Sub-project			2003 Sub-project		
	(i) CONAREF	(t) HCR-BKF	(i) CONAREF	(i2) RCPB	(t) HCR-BKF	(i) CONAREF	(j) CREDO	
B. Transport	910,849		0			12,500		
C. Domestic Needs/Household Support	14,011,991		8,675,601				65,000	
F. Health/Nutrition	10,910,596		7,184,881			471,724	110,143	
G. Shelter/Other infrastructure	8,737,650		4,068,000					
H. Community Services	2,735,849	150,000	4,979,455			704,080		
I. Education	13,649,377		6,200,101			150,000		
N. Income-Generation	2,672,584		9,385,000				530,000	
O. Legal Assistance/Protection	5,879,673	2,754,080	4,601,911			1,186,594		
P. Agency Operational Support	25,048,635		30,061,046			5,984,300	30,000	
TOTAL	84,557,203	2,904,080	75,155,995	0	0	8,509,198	735,143	
EQUIVALENT	US\$	114,773	3,990	103,418	0	0	13,934	1,204

Annex G. Note on lessons learned in the evaluation process and methodologies

The evaluation team is pleased to note that the organisation of the evaluation process and the logistical and administrative support it received, both at UNHCR Headquarters and in the field, can only be described as optimal. The following remarks aim to highlight those aspects that were especially helpful in carrying out the terms of reference. The improvements that could have been envisaged are very few in number, as detailed below.

The evaluation team

The evaluation team consisted of one (male) academic with previous UNHCR and evaluation experience and one (female) expert on refugee integration who is also in charge of an NGO. The different skills and experience of the two team members proved to be mutually enriching and enabled them to examine their data from distinct but complementary points of view. It was encouraging to find that despite the difference in perspective the evaluators came to similar conclusions on all substantive issues.

Overall organisation

The evaluation took place in the following stages:

1. Briefing at Headquarters and meeting with Steering Committee
2. Field Mission to Benin and Burkina Faso (three weeks in total)
3. Debriefing at Headquarters, with Steering Committee
4. Submission of summary report
5. Feed-back from the Field Office on summary report
6. Submission of draft report
7. Discussion of draft report at HQ with Steering Committee
8. Submission of report in final

This sequence of steps allowed for a maximum degree of consultation with all staff-members concerned prior to the submission of the final document. In this way, points of detail could be clarified, misunderstandings avoided and adequate consideration given to a wide range of opinions and suggestions.

Since the subject of this evaluation covered a longer time-span (1997-2003), access to prior years' records was particularly important, especially during stage one and three of the process. The fact that these records were well-kept and easily accessible in the Resettlement Section at UNHCR HQ facilitated the evaluation work considerably. In future evaluations dealing with multi-year programmes it may be

advisable to leave more time at Headquarters to go through files and archives, in addition to the briefing meetings. This applies particularly to stage 1 which in this case took only three days when it might well have been extended to four or five. This would also have allowed more time for the evaluation team to get to know each other better before the field mission and to plan the process in greater detail.

Stages three, five and seven proved to be essential in supplementing and refining the conclusions of the field mission. The debriefing at Headquarters after the field visit (stage three) enabled the team to raise many issues whose significance was not yet clear in the course of stage one. RO Benin's feed-back on the summary report (stage five) provided welcome input and clarified a number of key issues. Discussing the draft report in detail with the members of the Steering Committee and other staff concerned (stage seven) was particularly useful since the meeting provided the opportunity to rethink the issues involved once more with a view to producing recommendations that aim to be concrete, practical and realistic.

Fieldwork methodology

In conducting its research in the field, the team took account of UNHCR evaluation policy which states that 'the primary concern of all evaluations is the impact of UNHCR's work on the rights and welfare of refugees'.⁷³ Considering the fact that the main target group of the evaluation - some 226 refugees resettled to Benin and Burkina Faso - was relatively small, it was decided to make home visits to all refugee households concerned so as to meet with the entire family and get a first hand impression of their living conditions. This approach proved indispensable in giving us a cumulative insight into the actual situation faced by the resettled refugees.

In order to have a basis for comparison the team decided also to make a number of home visits to refugee households for whom Burkina Faso and Benin were first countries of asylum. In Burkina Faso these households were selected by the local refugee committee, which is perhaps the optimal approach. In the absence of such a committee in Benin, the selection of households was made by the implementing partner. In both countries the selection criteria were a) a representative breakdown of different nationalities and b) a representative breakdown of socio-economic status, ranging from the best integrated to the most marginalised.

Considering the fact that home visits were such a major aspect of the evaluation process it proved to be highly beneficial that the evaluation team consisted of a male and female team member. During the initial phase, visits were conducted jointly so that the team members could adjust their interviewing method and come to full agreement about the most appropriate questions to be asked and the key issues to be observed. Thereafter, separate visits were frequently undertaken, with the female team-member focusing on single women and female-headed households.

During all home visits the team made it clear from the very beginning that it

- did not represent UNHCR or its implementing partners;

⁷³ UNHCR's Evaluation Policy, September 2002, p.4.

ANNEX G

- had no decision making powers and hence could not engage in any kind of undertaking or raise any expectations;
- was only requested by UNHCR to make an independent report.

The refugees seemed to understand this clearly and were generally very appreciative of the fact that they were visited at home, with some claiming that they had never before been visited by aid agency staff. In certain cases, however, a level of mistrust could be detected, combined with what might be called 'evaluation fatigue', brought on by the fact that they had been asked similar questions many times before but, in their view, had never seen any change or improvement as a result. It must also be mentioned that the evaluation team came across a number of households where people were clearly living in a state of such misery and deprivation that it seemed almost injurious to enter their homes, ask many personal and often painful questions and depart without being able to grant any form of support or raise any hopes for betterment.

This brings up the entire question of providing refugees who are interviewed for evaluation purposes with some feed-back on the findings and conclusions of a report which deals with their situation and to which they may have made a significant contribution. As a matter of principle it would be desirable for such informants to receive a letter of appreciation from UNHCR with a brief summary of findings or action to be taken. The lack of any feed-back risks making refugees less willing to provide information to future interlocutors and is likely to raise doubts among them about the willingness of UNHCR to take their input seriously. For the purpose of future evaluations which involve a major role for refugee informants the feasibility of such a step should be actively considered already at the planning stage.

Stefan Sperl

Irinel Brădișteanu