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Casamance refugees in The Gambia: self-settlement and the challenges of integration

Gail Hopkins

E-mail: ghopkns@gmail.com

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UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Policy Development and Evaluation Service

**Policy Development and Evaluation Service
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
P.O. Box 2500, 1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland**

**E-mail: hqpd00@unhcr.org
Web Site: www.unhcr.org**

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Introduction

This paper discusses the situation of refugees from the Casamance region of southern Senegal who have crossed the border to settle in The Gambia as a result of the protracted, low level conflict and instability in their place of origin. The paper focuses on the interconnected issues of livelihoods, education and health for this group of refugees. The paper also focuses on the impact of donor assistance to date in this context and possible futures for assistance for Casamance refugees. By looking at these issues through the case of Casamance refugees in The Gambia, it is possible to draw lessons and develop strategies for other refugee populations in situations of protracted conflict.

The presence of this relatively small (in global terms) but long-term refugee population which is subject to new influxes is challenging for donors operating in the region and for the Government of The Gambia. In addition, the small scale of past and present donor assistance to Casamance refugees in the Gambia jeopardizes the refugees' achievement of even the most basic level of self-reliance and thus their integration.

Furthermore, the current reluctance of the Government of Senegal to recommence discussions with opposition groups which could lead to a workable and lasting resolution to the conflict has resulted in prolonged instability. Prior to 2006, many Casamance refugees engaged in cyclical flight and return as a response to the sporadic conflict, but the majority now do not due to the increased danger near the border. This has meant refugees increasingly have seen their futures being in The Gambia. and their need for security of livelihoods, health and education is correspondingly greater.

The Casamance conflict

Casamance is the southern region of Senegal and is situated to the south of The Gambia which divides Senegal virtually in two. Being separated from the north of Senegal where the capital, Dakar, and the Senegalese government is located, has produced some long term tensions based around the marginalization of the south. The Casamance people feel that Dakar has exploited the south's people and resources without a corresponding provision of financial, material and infrastructure. As a result, for nearly 30 years the people of Casamance have had expressed a desire for independence (See Woocher and Lawrence, 2000; Evans, 2003, 2004; de Jong and Gasser, 2005; Marut 2010).

Refusal by Dakar to consider independence, or to address the root causes of the tensions, resulted in the start of the conflict in 1982 between the separatist Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de Casamance (MFDC) forces and Senegalese military forces. Since this time, there have been numerous attempts at brokering peace deals¹, the more recent attempts supported by President Jammeh of The Gambia and President Wade of Senegal, and mediated

¹ 1991 Peace Treaty between MFDC and Senegalese Government signed in Guinea Bissau; 1992 Casamance Peace Commission held in Guinea Bissau; 1993 Peace Treaty signed in Ziguenchor; 1998 crisis meeting held in The Gambia between The Gambia, Senegal and Guinea Bissau; 1999 peace talks in Banjul resulting in a short-lived January 2000 Resolution; 2003 peace talks resulting in peace deal and amnesty for MFDC; 2004, new MFDC leader rejects Senegal's amnesty; 2007, ECOWAS produces a conflict prevention framework. (Sources: Gambian newspapers 1982-2007)

by Guinea Bissau and ECOWAS, but these failed to produce long term peace and stability. Furthermore, over the years opposition forces fragmented into two main groups, but with other smaller splinter groups being formed as well. The prospect of opposition forces speaking with one voice in any peace negotiation is therefore a fundamental challenge to lasting peace and the possibility of future refugee repatriation.

Because of the geographic isolation of the Casamance region and their sense of marginalization, many Casamançais question their political and social allegiance to the north, and to Senegal in general, identifying themselves as Casamançais whilst acknowledging they hold Senegalese papers.

This woman says yes they are Senegalese. The ID says Senegal. But the reason they are not having connection with Senegal is because they are not having peace and they [Senegal] are not protecting them. Senegal does not even care about them.... If you ask them where they are from they will not say Senegal, they will say Casamance.... All of them here say they feel they are from Casamance. They consider themselves as from Casamance not from Senegal.

So if I say to them, you are from Senegal, they will wish to correct me?

If you ask them where they are from, at any point they will say they are from Casamance.

Is there anything that could change that and make them feel part of Senegal?

They will always call themselves from the region [Casamance].

Group discussion, Jalo Koto - 11.2.11

During interviews when asked if, from time to time, they returned to Senegal or envisaged returning to Senegal permanently, their response would replace the word 'Senegal' with 'Casamance'.

Furthermore, a sense of social cohesion does not bridge north and south Senegal: the Wolof tend to dominate the north but are a minority in the south. In the south, Jola and Mandinka are dominant. Speaking Wolof in the south is perceived by Casamançais to demonstrate allegiance to Dakar, and may prove fatal to the individual if an opposition group member overhears. This is especially the case in border areas where only Jola and Mandinka will be spoken even if Wolof is known (discussion with interpreter, November 2010).

The conflict in Casamance is the longest running conflict in Africa (Evans 2004), commencing in 1982. The conflict has been characterized by sporadic fighting between MFDC and the Senegalese armed forces, by factional fighting, and by attacks on villages and villagers considered by the MFDC and other factions to oppose their aims for independence. A review of newspapers of The Gambia from 1982 – 2010² revealed peaks and troughs in fighting and in attacks on civilians and Casamance villages.

Over a period of years, fighting was reported as occurring during the various peace talks as a result of divisions within MFDC and as a result of MFDC leadership battles. In 2006, the Government of Senegalese increased its military presence in the region in an attempt to eradicate opposition activity. After an initial lull, this presence actually served to increase instability and spates of conflict. The situation from 2006 to the current date is that there are a series of 'border bases' on the Casamance side which are alternately occupied by Senegalese

² Newspapers which were the most prominent at the time of publication were reviewed, although The Point and The Observer dominate.

military and by one or other of the two main opposition forces. Most of these bases were formerly home to Casamance villagers. Clashes occur not only between the military and opposition groups, but between the two opposition groups.

Since 2006, the previous pattern of refugee flight and return - movement across the border to The Gambia to escape the fighting followed by a move back to Casamance again when the fighting stopped - has been replaced by a permanent movement into The Gambia. Although a minority of refugees does still return to their Casamance villages to gather fruit, farm, or to rescue belongings, this episodic flight and return can no longer be called a pattern.

The impossibility of returning to, or remaining in, Casamance is also grounded in fear. There is fear amongst displaced villagers because opposition groups and Senegalese forces who occupy some villages and compounds forcibly removed the occupants by threat to their life and by appropriating land, crops and livestock which formed the core of village livelihoods. Other villages have been completely destroyed.

Although the most fertile area of Senegal, the success of farming in Casamance has been disrupted by the conflict, forced abandonment of villages, animals and crops, and by the laying of landmines³. There is also fear of inadvertent association with opposition forces and consequent violence or punishment by the Senegalese military or other opposition members. The sense of the hopelessness of return is apparent when many refugees report that, even if the region was safe, their land has been spoiled and their homes and villages have been destroyed and would need complete rebuilding: an overwhelmingly daunting task for the refugees.

Hostilities increased in 2009 (see Home Office, 2010:16)⁴ and throughout 2010 with a spate of increased fighting in November 2010 between Senegalese forces and the opposition forces, and between the two opposition groups. This activity continued throughout the period of fieldwork with fighting occurring most nights along border areas running west from Gikess to Sibanor. This generated an influx of approximately 450 new refugees during the period mid-January to mid-February, 2011. At the end of February 2011, the Senegalese armed forces sealed the border between Gikess and Siwol in order to flush out opposition forces by preventing them escaping across the border to The Gambia.

The other result of this strategy was that Casamance civilians were trapped in the forest, having fled their homes trying to reach safety in The Gambia. Some managed to walk through the forest to Gikess, entering The Gambia at that point after several days. The border remained sealed for approximately three weeks, after which time other refugees arrived along the border in a highly distressed and malnourished condition, with some individuals going missing (conversation with Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA) field representative, 18.3.11). By mid-March, the number of new refugees had reached 700.

Although the wish for independence has been accepted by many Casamancais as unattainable, and even expressed as undesirable by an MFDC leader, Commander Diatta (The Observer,

³ Although a de-mining programme has cleared many mines, there continue to be occasional instances of death and injury by landmines in Casamance. For example, September 2006, Jeanie Waddell-Fournier, delegate of ICRC was killed; May 2008, a man was killed and 20 passengers injured when a bus drove over a landmine. (<http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/feature/senegal-feature-231209.htm>). Warning signs along the border indicate where walking or driving off a well-traveled path is not advised.

⁴ This report usefully provides a chronology of events of the Casamance conflict.

9.8.01), and although many Casamançais no longer support the MFDC, independence remains a goal for many. For this reason, opposition forces continue their activities against Senegalese armed forces and against each other. As a result, the region remains unstable and unpredictable.

Casamance refugees in The Gambia

According to registration data, there were 7,890 registered refugees from Casamance in The Gambia at the end of 2007 (UNHCR-WFP, 2009). This had risen to 8,241 in March 2010 (UNHCR, 2010). Of this, the number of registered refugees in rural areas had fallen slightly (7,290/6,494), whilst the number in urban areas had risen (600/1747). No assessment mission has been conducted since December 2009, but the Gambia Immigration Department (GID) and GAFNA officers constantly log new refugees who arrive at border villages.

Between mid-January 2011 and mid-March 2011 approximately 700 new refugees arrived. These figures do not include those who are unregistered due to absence at the time of the registration exercise, such as those visiting family, those who were in the bush gathering firewood, those travelling to hospital. Estimates by local donors and NGOs of the total number of Casamance refugees (registered and unregistered) living in The Gambia is thought to be between 10,000 and 11,000.

The majority of rural refugees are said by donors and non-governmental organizations to reside in approximately 56 Gambian host villages in the Foni district adjacent to the border with Casamance. Some of these villages straddle the border, others are between 500 metres and five kilometres from the border. A handful of villages hosting refugees are fifteen to twenty kilometers away. The number of host villages varies constantly as refugees move from one village to another or to urban areas should they, for instance, discover they have a family member elsewhere.

For example, the 2007 UNHCR registration exercise identified 52 host villages, whilst the December 2009 WFP-UNHCR Joint Assessment Mission identified 66, and the UNHCR 2010 Assessment identified 79 host villages. Drawing on figures from the above reports and on current records of UNHCR, GID and GAFNA, the number of villages which are hosting, or have hosted in the past, Casamance refugees is 83. However some of these can be classified as satellite villages and others may no longer have a refugee presence.

Refugees stay with family members if they can locate them, or with local villagers. Some move several times looking for family members, others move to urban areas for work. The result is a highly mobile refugee population. Depending on the hospitality of host villagers or even family members is an additional responsibility few hosts are able to bear easily and increases poverty and vulnerability in terms of food security, health and housing for the host family themselves.

As new influxes increased after 2006, international donors intervened to provide to refugees support such as food aid and basic material resources such as sleeping mats and mosquito nets. Later, donors expanded assistance to include host villagers in recognition of their own consequent vulnerability.

Rural refugees are reasonably well organized, with each village having a refugee leader. Villages hosting refugees were organized into clusters by GAFNA and the refugee leader was

in frequent contact with GAFNA field officers covering the area. Dissemination of information was therefore fairly effective among rural Casamance refugees although there were some shortcomings which are discussed later.

All Casamance refugees in The Gambia are entitled to refugee identity cards which allow them freedom to live, work and move within The Gambia. The refugee identity card also entitles payment by UNHCR of refugee children's school fees up to a ceiling level of 5000 dalasi per annum (approx US\$180). At the time of writing, holding refugee identification should allow free medical care at government hospitals and clinics, but this did not always occur in practice and is subject to a complex system, discussed in more detail later. Refugee cards may be applied for in Banjul at GID.

Due to the distance between host villages and Banjul, many new arrivals cannot afford the journey to Banjul. GID therefore implements an annual refugee registration programme in rural areas whereby refugee cards may be applied for in specified villages on particular days. Most rural refugees now have this documentation. A minority had travelled or were sick at the time of the last exercise or have arrived in the past year and therefore remain without it. GID was conducting an exercise during April 2011.

Assistance to the refugees

The increased influx of Casamance refugees and the larger numbers permanently living in The Gambia (as opposed to flight/return) from 2006, required international donor assistance to both refugees and to the host families with whom they were living. UNHCR appealed to WFP who began food assistance in September 2006.

Intended as short term, their assistance continued until July 2009, with a limited distribution until February 2010 to clear warehouses. Since February 2010 WFP has ceased all assistance to Casamance refugees in The Gambia (conversations, WFP, November 2010, and UNHCR, November 2010). During this period, UNHCR, via its then implementing partners Gambia Red Cross (GRC) and GAFNA, supplied items such as latrines, water, sleeping mats, mosquito nets and basic clothing items.

After the final official WFP supply in July 2009, assistance switched from food assistance to sustainable livelihood programmes. Largely, these programmes have been effected through initiatives aimed at restoring farming practices, the traditional livelihood of the majority of Casamance refugees, and includes the establishment of community gardens which predominantly are run by women.

A significant part of this initiative was the distribution in May 2010 by UNHCR of tools, animals and seeds to refugee families. A similar follow-up distribution by UNHCR is set for May 2011. In addition, initiatives included a bakery project and tie-and-dye and soap-making which target women.

In March 2011, responding to the new influx of refugees during the first months of 2011, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), via GRC, distributed a one-off emergency distribution of three months' supply of food, sleeping mats and hygiene items to those refugees documented by GID as arriving between mid-January and mid-March 2011 (428 refugees).

At the time of fieldwork, UNHCR planned to distribute a two month supply of similar items in April/May 2011, targeting refugees who arrived after the ICRC assessment mission prior to distribution, plus further anticipated arrivals.

Other international donors are active in The Gambia in relation to refugees, including Concern Universal who operate cross-border programmes and USAID whose emphasis is in Casamance itself, and there are also a number of local non-governmental organizations providing support at local rural and urban levels.

Methodology

The fieldwork was conducted between November 2010 and March 2011 following a pilot study in June-July 2010. A qualitative approach was used comprising village group discussions and semi-structured household interviews in rural areas of the Foni district of The Gambia.

Twelve village group discussions and fourteen household interviews were held. In total, nineteen villages were visited. In some cases, villages which were very close or with a very small number of refugees combined with other villages for group discussions (for example, Bitta was combined with Janack, and Kafuta with Kafuta Tumbung). In total therefore, 23 villages were covered. During the group discussions, women were encouraged to speak up and put forward their points, which mostly they did. Three of the household interviews were women only, and four were men only.

Keeping discussions gender specific was a challenge as it was common during discussions for people to wander in and out of the house, an occurrence that was difficult to politely control. This was equally challenging in cases of men-only and women-only discussions. The age range of respondents was from adolescents to approximately 70 years. Although the focus of this research was not specifically on challenges faced by refugee youth, information on this subject arose in discussion and is included where applicable.

All interviews and group discussions were recorded with the permission of respondents and were translated from Jola and Mandinka into English by one male and one female translator who were fluent in those languages. Names have been altered for anonymity. Ethical considerations were adhered to and were guided by the advice laid down by The Oral History Society (www.oralhistory.org.uk/ethics/index.php).

In addition to interviews with refugees, discussions were held with senior staff members and fieldworkers of donor organizations, implementing partners and NGOs working with Casamance refugees in The Gambia, in particular UNHCR, World Food Programme, World Health Organization, Gambia Red Cross, International Committee of Red Cross, Gambian Food and Nutrition Association, and the Gambian Immigration Department.

These discussions were ongoing throughout the period of fieldwork and complement the interviews with refugees to inform the research in terms of the history of assistance and the present and projected presence of assistance, as well as to provide balance to data gathered during interviews. Information was also gathered, and understanding enhanced, through informal conversation, general interaction and participant observation.

Villages were selected to give a variety of overall village population size and of refugee population presence. Selection was also made to include those villages in immediate proximity to the border, and those at a few kilometers distance. Also, selection was made to avoid covering the same villages as the 2009 UNHCR-WFP JAM and the UNHCR March 2010 Assessment. This was to avoid research fatigue amongst respondents and to gather information from villages not visited by those organizations. It must be acknowledged that selection of villages occurred with the support of the expert field guidance of GAFNA and of GRC, both of whom have a long history of working with this group of refugees, and with the assistance of the National Environment Agency.

The following sections present a preliminary analysis of data collected during fieldwork and considers the links between livelihoods, education and health, the impact of donor assistance strategies, and the successful integration of Casamance refugees. It is essential to look at these as connected issues with outcomes dependant on each other, rather than in isolation as, say, livelihoods alone because the impact each has on the other facilitates or forms barriers to rebuilding lives.

In the case of self-settled refugees such Casamance refugees in The Gambia, they are far less visible than those in camp situations (this is commented upon later) and this section aims to increase understanding of what self-settled refugees do when they take flight (Bakewell, 2008) and how they do it in order for assistance to be effectively planned and delivered.

Settling: where, how and with whom

When Casamance refugees initially flee to The Gambia they go the safest and shortest route across the border. Those who can choose their time of flight travel at night giving them some safety in the darkness and forest and allowing them to see and avoid the bullets and mortar fire. Others flee as opposition forces or Senegalese military enter their village or their house. Many leave empty-handed – a phrase used repeatedly by respondents – and others leave with minimal belongings. All leave behind their houses, including the valuable corrugate roofing, most of their clothes, cooking pots, animals, land and stored crops.

Refugees arrive initially in Gambian border villages where they are received by Gambian host villagers. Some of the arrivals continue immediately to a village nearby where they know there are relatives who will host them. Others remain in the border village, perhaps remaining indefinitely or moving on at a later date when they hear of relatives elsewhere. Later, some will move to urban areas in search of work to support family remaining in the villages or to attend secondary school.

The common factor in host villages receiving new arrivals is that hosts welcome the refugees and share food, give clothes as many refugees arrive with only the clothes they wear, and provide space in the host home for refugees to live. This may be for a day or two until the refugee locates family elsewhere, or may be for years as was the case with a substantial number of respondents.

The World Bank has identified that 60 per cent of Gambians fall below the poverty line and that the situation of the rural population is particularly unpredictable due to their dependence on agriculture. Host households themselves therefore often struggle to be self-reliant and hosting refugee families and individuals increases poverty and vulnerability for the host family themselves. For example, some houses I visited were home to over 30 individuals,

with eight adults to a small room at night. Although this situation was not the majority, neither was it unusual.

Once the refugee decides they will stay in that village, the Alkalo may give land for them to build a house and to farm⁵. Whilst this appears to offer a solution, it was very difficult for many refugees to convert this into the reality of a finished house and a good crop from which they could regain self-sufficiency.

The reason explained by fieldworkers is that refugees understandably would not be given the most fertile land in the village, resulting in a poor crop (conversation, GAFNA February, 2011). Lack of tools and animals with which to farm also reduced the potential of their crop. Additionally, although it was straightforward to make mud bricks for a house, the cost of buying corrugate for the roof to complete the house was prohibitive for most respondents. Asked if all the refugees have their own house, one refugee leader replied:

For the refugees' houses, they are not well prepared, the roofs are still not yet finished. The corrugate is a matter to run to a relative 'help me two packets', run to another relative 'help me two packets'. We were given empty land to manage this but still refugees live with the host. Most of them have houses, but others don't.

Group discussion, Upart - 9.2.11)

The alternative of palm leaves for roofing also presented financial barriers as payment has to be made for the cutting and transportation of leaves, plus a cost has to be borne each year to replace leaves to avoid water damage to the house in rainy season.

The result is that although Casamance refugees may have access to land in the village, they may be unable to build a house and therefore many remain in the host's house. WFP reports the refugee housing situation has improved since their previous report in 2006 (WFP 2009:7) at which time 80 per cent of refugees lived in host houses. However in almost all villages where interviews took place, the opportunity to look at living conditions at close quarters showed that a significant number of refugees remained with host villagers.

Due to the scale of this study it is not possible to state how many refugee families are living with hosts, however it can be said that in each village visited there was at least one instance of a refugee family living with a host, and in most villages there was more than one. Examples of this are in Upart (above) where sleeping mats and mattresses filled the three metre square room where eight adults slept, and Bullock where a house was home to 32 people from combined host and refugee families.

Joining a community

So far, host villagers have mainly been Gambian villagers but increasingly, new influx refugees are hosted by Casamance refugees who have already started settling in the villages. Continued refugee influxes and ongoing assistance which occur in a context of existing local poverty, such as in The Gambia, present challenges which go beyond the challenges faced by the displaced themselves. It is also useful to reflect that self-settled refugees have an impact on the communities they join.

⁵ In most villages land is given free of charge. In a small number of larger villages land has to be purchased.

It was recognized in 2007 by UNHCR and WFP that providing supplies to the Casamance refugees only was not sufficient but that additional supplies were needed by villagers who have hosted, and are continuing to host, Casamance refugees. This was felt necessary to avoid increased vulnerability to villagers⁶ and supplies were therefore given to host villagers as well (WFP, 2007:7). This strategy additionally went a long way toward avoiding, although not eradicating, jealousy derived from supporting the newcomers.

Now that WFP assistance for refugees has ceased, support to villagers has also ceased. This has caused consternation to both groups and refugees expressed a sense of abandonment and hopelessness (repeated words deleted):

[We] cannot be the same as the host even if [we] stay another 20 years.... Some of them are saying that as they are living suffering here, some of them want to go back, even they die they don't care. This is how some of them feel.... Some of them are saying, even I go back I die there. No problem.

Are others thinking this?

They say, yes of course. For them to go back and die is better. Somebody who is alive he is just there, alive. That person, what he is waiting for? In Casamance you can do something and have 100 dalasi. Here even to have one dalasi is a problem. He is saying, if this thing continues, then let him just go back and die. He knows he can farm there and have something, but when you get that something, rebels will follow him and that is the end of it [death].

Group discussion, Jalo Koto - 11.2.11

It could be argued this reaction to the end of food assistance is a sign of the development of dependency on food aid and perhaps there is some truth in this. However during fieldwork there was considerable evidence of poverty levels of refugees being worse than that of Gambian villagers despite assessments to the contrary which informed WFP withdrawal of food assistance (WFP, 2009). This evidence included not only food, but the ability for example to buy soap or buy the materials to make soap to wash clothes, replacement of worn sleeping mats and mosquito nets, and inability to buy roofing materials.

Because of the custom of solidarity as it was phrased by a GRC staff member (conversation, GRC 29.3.11) villagers share what they have with the refugees, but also refugees share what they have with the villagers and this was, and is, factored into assistance. ICRC, for example, in their March 2011 emergency distribution allocated 50kg of rice per person (including children) for a three month period. It was estimated by ICRC this would be in excess of requirements but that it would cover refugee sharing of food with villagers.

Sharing of course occasionally has its limits. During the ICRC assessment mission prior to the emergency distribution⁷, ICRC delegates visited Kagali immigration office to establish the whereabouts of refugees who arrived in January and February 2011. ICRC was told by immigration that the refugees returned to Casamance because villagers said they could not support them. Remarkably, this was the only time during the fieldwork this was reported.

⁶ World Bank poverty assessment data states nearly 60 percent of the population of the Gambia falls below the overall poverty line and 40 percent below the food poverty line, with less than a quarter being classified as 'in a non-precarious position'. (www.worldbank.org accessed 13.5.11).

⁷ The author accompanied both the ICRC assessment mission and the two day ICRC distribution.

The strain hosting refugees puts on already vulnerable villagers is significant and there are several areas of tensions that arise at the household level. For example, women struggling to cook at the same time, sharing cooking pots and generally using the often small cooking space sometimes led to arguments. Men reported that as their home was not their own they constantly felt like guests and had to comply with the hosts wishes, whatever those wishes were. This last point led some families to move on to a different village, seeking family members elsewhere who would host them. For hosts and refugees alike, the system of hosting refugees is not without its challenges.

Camp versus community

For donors and local partners interviewed for this study the key challenge to supporting Casamance refugees in The Gambia was unanimously identified as the mobility of refugees. For donors, the logistics of giving assistance would be simpler if refugees were in a camp situation (conversation, UNHCR, 31.3.11). Indeed, settling in host villages has rendered Casamance refugees in the Gambia far less visible than other contexts which situate refugees in camp situations. In fact, prior to 2006, there were refugee camps in The Gambia at Kwinella, Bambali, Sifoe, Kitti and Basse.

These camps were closed when numbers of refugees dropped. With the increased influx from 2006 onwards, UNHCR considered re-opening camps at Sifoe and Kitti but the Government of The Gambia were reluctant to place tented camps near these border areas as this could attract visits from opposition members who were likely to be armed (conversations, GID November 2010, and UNHCR, November 2010). Not only would this present a danger, but it would increase fear amongst refugees in the camps. It was therefore decided to place refugees in the old camp at Bambali where some Casamance refugees had been situated before its closure (see UNHCR, 2004:7).

However refugees refused to go there on the basis that it was far from their Casamance home where they could maybe recover their animals, materials and fruit crops at some point and continue to have contact with family remaining in Casamance (conversations, GRC fieldworker, June 2010 and UNHCR 31.3.11). It was in this way that Casamance refugees came to settle in host villages rather than living in camps.

During discussions with refugees around their general hardships, they were asked to reflect on whether they preferred camp to village living. The certainty within a camp environment of health care and education provision and the relative ease with which donors may provide food assistance and thus food security, was overwhelmingly outweighed for respondents by the perceived advantages and future security of settling in a village.

So you will spend fifteen years in a camp. Planting a tree or having a garden. What comes after fifteen years? But if you are in a village, try some small production, you can plant some trees, oranges and mangoes, then in some time they can bring you something. If you think of [the effort] of today - when tomorrow comes, it is there.

Group discussion, Bajana - 1.12.10

She said, they are not used to living in camps. Privacy might be a problem in camps. But where they are now [in the village] it's almost like living in their home.

Group discussion, Ndemban Jola - 22.6.10

The man was expressing that a camp held only a future of dependence and vulnerability as they lived in fear that one day they will be told to leave the camp with nothing: the tree would be lost, but in the village they will have the benefit of it. In a village, he said, 'at least they can try, not to sit and wait'.

There are other benefits of village living which respondents did not themselves identify, perhaps because they have never lived in a camp situation: they have freedom of movement either temporarily or permanently able to move to other locations, and registered refugees have civil and legal rights granted them by the Government of the Gambia (see Harrell-Bond, 2010:13).

Whilst a camp situation simplifies and perhaps improves assistance to refugees, village living decreases dependency and begins the process of successful integration. There were however some factors that proved confusing for refugees and constitute impediments to self-reliance and integration as the next sections discuss.

Donor and government assistance

Although periodic assessments and exercises are conducted by UNHCR and GID (for example, WFP 2009; UNHCR 2010; UNHCR 2011) to update refugee location and numbers and field officers log new arrivals on an ongoing basis, the logistics of donor assistance to this group of refugees meets with specific challenges which impact on the effectiveness of assistance and on the identification of appropriate interventions.

This research has shown these challenges relate to the mobility of the refugee population, to their apparent 'successful' integration derived from their living in host villages rather than in camps which may render them 'invisible' or difficult to identify, and to the effective communication of information from donors/partners to refugees in order to provide access to available services and resources. A further impediment to successful outcomes for this group of refugees can be identified in the transition period from aid to sustainable livelihood programmes. The following paragraphs explore these challenges.

When a refugee is registered by GID, they are registered to a particular village, however they do not have to remain there. Living in a village setting and having refugee identification allows refugees freedom of movement to move permanently or temporarily to another village to settle, to visit family or friends, or move to an urban area for work or education. Their freedom of movement is a central component of their survival strategy.

This study found refugees often moved to a different location through choice, perhaps having found a distant relative in another village or believing they had a better chance of success elsewhere. There was however the awareness expressed by some that they were a burden on the host household or that tensions within the household were becoming unmanageable, and this proved the impetus for moving as previously described.

Refugee mobility, however, was reported by donors and their partners as highly challenging for international donors and their local partners in terms of tracking refugee populations for distribution and monitoring purposes. Where should resources be placed? Where should programmes be rolled out? How to assess the needs of refugees or their success at integrating? How to monitor the success of a programme? An example of this is the March 2011 ICRC emergency distribution which the author saw at first hand. For the distribution, ICRC used GID's register of new influx Casamance refugees. The register logs names and village locations of the new refugees.

Despite the distribution being between only three and five weeks after the arrival of the new influx, considerable time was spent during the two day distribution 'finding' refugee families who were not where the register said they were. ICRC succeeded in locating these families who had already moved to other villages and delivered the supplies. This example is a small one affecting only 428 refugees covered in this ICRC distribution, but is typical of the challenge faced by donors in getting their support to refugees.

Although mobility of the refugee population impedes accurate distribution of resources and monitoring, and renders some refugees invisible through their 'disappearance' from the radar of donors, it remains that village living aids integration and provides the backdrop for successful settlement. This is supported by refugees themselves as the discussions in Bajana and Ndemban Jola reveal above. Typically, refugees would come back on the radar to collect WFP supplies because they are obliged to collect from the village at which they were originally registered by GID. Providing a useful opportunity to monitor refugees, the reality was that not all refugees could attend the distribution due to the cost of transport there and back and thus numbers were distorted.

The major donor assistance for Casamance refugees in The Gambia has consisted of health and education provision paid for by UNHCR, previous food assistance from WFP, ongoing UNHCR sustainable livelihood programmes managed by UNHCR's implementing partner GAFNA and previously also by GRC. This is in addition to the refugee identification documentation provided by the Government of The Gambia which waives the annual alien levy (1000 dalasi/US\$35 per person) and assures the same rights as enjoyed by Gambian nationals.

Health

Financed by UNHCR, each Casamance refugee in The Gambia is entitled to free medical care at a government hospital or clinic on production of their refugee card. There are slight variants for rural and urban based refugees. The system however is confusing and is open to abuse. This study found confusion amongst refugees and NGOs alike.

The confusion arises over where free medical care can be accessed, what the procedure is for access, and if medicine is available. One large clinic and a hospital are situated in Sibanor and Bwiam respectively and serve the Foni district where rural refugees are living. Free medical care is available at both on presentation of a refugee card (or the parent's card in the case of under-18s). Two medium-size clinics are situated in Bullock and Kafuta. UNHCR distribute medical supplies to each of these (conversation, UNHCR 31.3.11). Respondents reported that

they were aware they could receive free medical care⁸ but they believed this did not extend to the provision of medicine.

From discussions with refugees and NGO field workers it appeared the provision of medicine free of charge to refugees was *ad hoc* with the result that refugees would not make the trip (entailing cost of transport) to the larger, better equipped units at Sibonor or Bwiam as they felt they were unlikely to receive medicine free. The sense of confusion reported during this research is supported by findings in a recent WFP report which focused on health and nutrition: ‘it is disturbing to note that treatment is not sought for some children because respondents did not know where to go to for advice/treatment, or did not have money’ (WFP, 2010:28). Cost of transport was also a factor identified during interviews in Upart:

How will we get to the hospital? If you feel ill, you go to Sibonor. If they cannot help, you go to Bwiam. From here to Sibonor is a big fare. And Bwiam is far.

Refugee Leader, Upart - 9.2.11

There are smaller, local clinics in certain villages or village clusters which not surprisingly hold very limited supplies but which attract refugees mainly due to proximity. For more serious cases, if there was time, refugees may borrow money to travel to urban centres such as Brikama or Serekunda where they believed they would receive better care. However, this also proves problematic as there is a prescribed system for refugees to access medical care when in the urban areas. First, the refugee must visit the UNHCR clinic at Bakoteh and present their refugee card to the doctor attending who will give a referral to the government hospital in Banjul. The refugee then travels to Banjul for free treatment at the hospital. If the refugee goes direct to the hospital at Banjul, medical care is not free.

No respondent expressed knowledge of this system and, through interviews with urban refugee family members, it was discovered that rural refugees visiting the urban area for medical care used private clinics or went direct to the hospital in Banjul through lack of awareness of the required system. They therefore did not receive free medical care. Even for the author, the system seemed time-consuming and tedious to follow, also requiring transport costs to Bakoteh and Banjul.

Whether there are medicines and medical care available free of charge or not, much of the rural refugees’ strategy around health care is based on a perception or uncertainty about the absence of medical supplies, confusion over what is free and what they must pay for, plus the cost of transport to distant clinics, all preventing them attempting to access health care in the first place. Where they do attempt to do so, their lack of knowledge of how to negotiate the system of free medical care for refugees proves an obstacle.

The community systems of health care present in rural areas, such as the local clinics, traditional birthing attendants, and an ambulance supplied by UNHCR, evidences that a rural health infrastructure exists, but the lack of resources to make this operate effectively undermines such initiatives (conversations, GRC fieldworker, November 2010). Furthermore, as Tang and Fox wrote, refugees are more at risk of psychological disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress than non-refugees (2001:507). This being a known factor

⁸ Urban refugees, although not included in this paper, were almost all unaware of the availability of free health care on production of their refugee card. Those who were aware were totally confused as to which clinics they could access free and by what method and ended up paying for health care.

in refugee health, it is disheartening that there is only one counselor available at the UNHCR counseling centre in Bakoteh who covers the entire refugee population.

There were also reports by field officers of the misuse of refugee cards. There had been instances during 2010 of Gambian nationals using refugee cards to access free health care. When this abuse of the system was discovered, free health care for refugees was discontinued and a charge of 15 dalasi (US\$0.50) was imposed. It seemed this was only applicable at Sibanor and Bwiam but was a source of confusion that no-one, refugee or field worker alike, was able to clarify.

Education

A similar confusion exists over access to education. Constantly during interviews, respondents expressed surprise that their children could receive free education. Many were paying for their children to go to school, a burden which often meant a choice between school fees and food. Interviews with refugees revealed few had any clear understanding of what refugee children were entitled to or how and where to receive it. This lack of clarity resulted in non-attendance or interrupted education:

For this boy he was in the Kombos going to school. For this [younger] boy he is here [at school]. For this [older] boy [I] didn't have enough money to pay the school fees. So that is the time when the boy decided to come back and help at home. He is just trying his chances for this [other] boy to complete his school.... This boy is 17 and this other one is in primary school.

Father, Sutusinjang - 21.12.10

This older boy completed Grade 9 but stopped school and now collects firewood to help the family. The boy said he would go back to school if he can, but:

My school was stopping and starting, so I say, let me stop. I say it's becoming useless. It's when I come and support here. I say, try a new purpose.

Son, Sutusinjang - 21.12.10

Lack of awareness of free education meant the older boy suffered an interrupted education which prevented him, ultimately, finding employment which would be valuable to the family economy. But paying for education was a common, but avoidable, worry:

They are very much worried about the fate of their children's education in school. For them as women, they are not much engaged in any activity that could add much money to be able to pay and keep their kids in school. So that is a major challenge for them.

Group discussion, Ndemban Jola - 22.6.10

The common reasons respondents gave for refugee children not attending school or being sent home were unpaid school fees, no shoes, no uniform or unwashed uniform. Respondent reports show that schools varied on how strictly they adhered to these matters.

The system is that UNHCR pays for refugee children to attend school up to a ceiling of 5000 dalasi per annum (US\$180) on presentation of one parent's refugee card. This system is administered though GAFNA who receive funding for school fees and pay the schools when

notified that a refugee child has registered. It is also possible for a parent to pay the fees and reclaim it from GAFNA. It was reported by several GAFNA field staff independently that problems occur because funds received at the beginning of the year are allocated to urban refugee children's fees first.

Whilst the author was unable to obtain documented evidence to support this, it is true to say that many respondents reported their children's fees were late being paid and that some teachers (although not all) would then refuse a refugee child entry to school. The lateness of payments is not new. It was reported in 2004 that implementing partners expressed 'frustration at the financial and human resource constraints in the implementation of their programmes.

The late transfer of allocated money from [Branch Office] Dakar led to increased problems in the timely delivery of services to the refugees' (UNHCR, 2004:17). UNHCR also pays for uniforms and books (conversation, UNHCR 31.3.11) although awareness of this by refugees seemed almost nil. (Last sentence of para deleted as it is incorrect.)

The situation for free education seems straightforward: presentation of a refugee card gains entry to school. However, that many refugee respondents claimed to be unaware of this was clearly a source of frustration to UNHCR and GAFNA staff members. It was agreed by one senior UNHCR staff member that 'this information had to be disseminated over and over again' (UNHCR 31.3.11). It seems the refugees did not know what to do but, in his opinion, they did but they chose to follow their own system.

The question to be answered in respect of both health and education is why and where does the communication of entitlement and method of access falter? Does it falter or do refugees prefer to follow their own system regarding education? One reason could be that in Casamance education was free in government schools. The refugees are therefore not accustomed to negotiating a system and its rules in order to determine what is free and what they must pay for. At the moment, however, it is common that refugee children had broken education as is evidenced above. Clearer guidance could be the answer, but drawing from donor and NGO staff member comments and the responses from refugees regarding children being sent home from school, it may be that a degree of hand-holding may be necessary.

Similarly, for the system for accessing health care. In both cases, village and village clusters have refugee leaders who are a vital part of the communication network providing a point of contact for fieldworkers, and are a central part of the dissemination process already in place in the communication structure. The need for capacity-building of implementing partners has been pointed out in a 2004 report on refugee livelihoods in The Gambia (UNHCR, 2004:16). Extending this to refugee leaders in order to enhance dissemination of vital information may positively affect refugees in areas such as education and health care.

Livelihood programming

A significant part of the newly introduced sustainable livelihood programme was UNHCR distribution in May 2010 of 100 sets of donkeys and tools to selected rural refugee communities. One set was to be shared between four families, thus this assistance reached four hundred families representing approximately 40% of rural Casamance refugee families. In addition, all refugee families received a supply of groundnut seeds to plant.

There were certain shortcomings of the animals/implements initiative of May 2010 which are related to the resources available to UNHCR (conversations, UNHCR November 2010, GAFNA November 2010). The distribution reached 400 families who had to organize themselves to share a set of animals and tools between four families. This produced tensions between families who, due to the oncoming rains, required the animals and tools at the same time.

The main cause for concern, however, was that the animals did not have time to rest and became overworked and six of the animals were reported by GAFNA fieldworkers to have died before the planting was completed. Villagers commented that the animals were already tired and old and therefore not best suited to the hard work that sharing between four families entailed.

We received six donkeys. We don't have six now. Two of them have died, one is also sick. They were weak and we don't have power enough to cure them when they are sick. They were from a very far place. I am sure they brought them very far and by the time we receive them, they were without food.

Refugee Leader, Upart - 9.2.11

Some of the donkeys died as they were suffering from old age even when we received them.

Group discussion, Ndemban Jola - 22.6.10

The families who did not receive animals or tools, but received only seeds, farmed either with their hands or borrowed tools from host villagers. Borrowing tools was similarly problematic as, of course, host villagers needed to use the tools themselves before the rains and this led to tensions and frustration. The result was that many refugee respondents reported they farmed with their hands, leading to a poor crop.

Insufficient resources have proved a frustration to those involved historically. Referring to the Bambali camp in 2003: 'refugees themselves and staff of GAFNA stress the need for the items for food production (seed of groundnuts, beans, tools, fertilizer), as well as capital and materials for a wider variety of income-generating approaches.... there is often a strong desire to engage in income generating activities, but there is a lack of outside technical assistance from UNHCR and/or its partners' (UNHCR, 2004:8-9). Absence of resources today impinges not only upon refugees' ability to move toward self-reliance but upon their dignity as they remain dependant on the host and inevitably upon ongoing donor assistance.

The year before last they do farming. But they have small [crop]. Last year also the same. This year they are hoping to do the same activity. The reasons why they are unable to have the desired yield from the [land] that is allocated to them [by the Alkalo] is they are not fertile. And secondly they have no support on implements, they have no support on fertilizer. They have been unable to compete against the weeds or to improve the fertility of the soil. As they are a farming community they would [like to] be supported with farming tools [applause].

Group discussion, Ndemban Jola - 22.6.11

Other initiatives included training in tie-and-dye and soap-making. Women at several villages valued this training and now wanted assistance with materials in order to begin small

enterprises. They felt confident and were enthusiastic about the potential success of this activity which is indicative of their desire and willingness to be self-reliant. At Sibonor, a bakery project had been established. This was enthusiastically received by refugees but the profit generated did not pay everyone a wage and did not cover replacement ingredients:

They don't pay everyone.... They rent the building so at the end of the month they pay the rent.... Right now, they [the donor] promised them 50 bags of flour and bicycles to get around the villages. But still there [are no bicycles]. They need five bicycles. Four for the salesmen, the fifth one for the baker who lives far.

What do you hope for the future of the bakery?

Now they have one bakery to five villages. It would be better to have one bakery in every village. If you can help for them to have the flour. As far as they have the flour they can manage with this.

He thinks if he has flour the bakery can make a profit?

Yes, but the profit is small ... and ...is not enough to pay people. With the profit they buy the baking powder and other ingredients.

But the idea is that the profit buys the flour as well and pays people. Who supplies the financial advice?

Chairman of bakery project, Manena - 12.2.11

At the end of fieldwork the bakery project was failing due to its continued reliance on the donor supplying ingredients. There was not time during the study to investigate the source and quality of financial advice, but it would seem that inadequate financial planning and basic business training was leading to the failure of this potentially lucrative business.

The shortcomings of the animals/tools distribution and of the bakery project is apparent, but a further impediment to successfully re-establishing self-reliance and aiding integration can be found in the transition period from food assistance to sustainable livelihood programming. It can be reflected that the method of transition has its roots in the camp situation, whereby refugee populations are cared for and maintained by overarching formulaic systems.

Refugees in a camp situation have limited means of establishing enterprises unless they have financial assistance from remittances, for example. It may therefore be argued there is limited value in involving the refugees in decisions relating to aid provision. In a self-settled situation however there is considerable value in involving refugees in decision-making processes related to, for example, the transition from food aid to sustainable livelihood programming. By informing self-settled refugees of the change to come, they are granted choices: it is not something *done to them* by donors and their partners or a government, but something in which they may claim a part.

WFP food assistance began in September, 2006 and ceased officially in July 2009. According to respondents, food aid stopped suddenly which resulted in feelings of insecurity and abandonment. WFP countered that extensive efforts had been made to inform the communities that food aid would cease (conversation WFP director, 20.6.11). It therefore seems this information had not filtered down adequately to the refugees from those in touch with WFP. Had refugees been given advance warning, they would know what to expect. Recognizing that assistance has a limit and that they have to help themselves, this man said,

But the help from WFP [stopped] without informing anybody. If perhaps you come and say today we give you 12kgs, tomorrow we give you 6kgs ... but the same day you come you say bye bye. That is difficult.

Bajana, group discussion - 1.12.10

WFP's and UNHCR's planning around the transition from food aid to sustainable livelihood programming constituted a considered approach: food assistance was never intended by WFP to be long term (conversation, WFP January 2011), the level of new arrivals had declined to below the level of concern identified by WFP,⁹ and a level of integration had occurred which, arguably, put refugees' standard of living in line with Gambian nationals (conversation, WFP January 2011).

It was time for WFP to pull back and for UNHCR to step in again. Discussions between donors resulted in a planned switch from perceived dependence on aid to promoting self-reliance. Paradoxically, by breakdowns in the conveyance of these plans (perhaps via the established network of refugee leaders) Casamance refugees on this occasion were rendered powerless and subject to the pre-conceived ideas of what refugees needed.

The links between livelihoods, education, health and donor assistance strategies or government policy, and the successful integration and self-reliance of refugees in self-settled situations are essential to note because in the self-settled situation the impact one has on the other is amplified due to the absence of the safety net, or structured 'care' environment, of the camp situation. Factoring in these links to planning programmes either facilitates or forms barriers to self-reliance and re-building lives.

For example, interrupted education leads to limited or uncertain employment opportunities, thereby disadvantaging family economies. Donor assistance with regard to roofing materials would lead to improved health and fewer instances of transmission of disease as overcrowded housing situations decrease. Overcoming uncertain access to medicine and medical care and the complex system of access could help avoid deaths and chronic illness. (paragraph break deleted) Incorporating basic business training into funding for projects such as the bakery would assist the success and sustainability of such projects.

Conclusion

On hearing in 2002 that the UNHCR Banjul office was to close, Casamance refugees staged protests, arguing that continued MFDC activities lead to refugee influxes and that the UNHCR presence is therefore needed. One Casamance refugee was reported as saying 'who will help us solve our problems, are we forgotten, dumped, or what?' (The Observer, 14th January 2002:3). A fear of being forgotten and abandoned remains amongst many Casamance refugees in The Gambia.

Writing of camp situations, Crisp (2003:1) suggested a definition of a protracted refugee situation was one in which refugees 'have lived in exile for more than five years, and ... still have no immediate prospect of finding a durable solution to their plight by means of voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement.' This definition is applicable to Casamance refugees in The Gambia: they cannot return to Casamance because it is unsafe to do so, there is almost no prospect of them being resettled in a third country, and the level of

⁹ This was the case until November 2010.

integration many have been able to achieve in The Gambia has been limited by barriers to effectively re-establishing livelihoods, diversifying into new skills, and accessing uninterrupted education. This results in a population which to a large extent is trapped in long term dependency and vulnerability.

The barrier to integration here is not the host state's reluctance to allow Casamance refugees to settle permanently as Crisp's definition of protracted situations suggests (indeed, the Government of The Gambia allows Casamance refugees to hold refugee identity indefinitely, granting rights to live and work in The Gambia), but that most rural Casamance refugees do not possess and cannot gain the resources to re-establish themselves to achieve integration which will provide a standard of living and a future comparable to that which they had in Casamance. Real integration equates to recapturing a level of life one enjoyed prior to flight: a level few refugees around the globe achieve.

The ending of WFP food assistance to this continually vulnerable refugee population in 2010 may prompt the question, was food assistance withdrawn too soon? The answer from this research would suggest that it is the transition period from food assistance to sustainable livelihood programming and the absence of sufficient resources with which to facilitate those programmes which are in question, not the ending of food assistance itself. Evidence gathered during fieldwork suggests shortcomings in planning and resources have been damaging to the prospects of this group of refugees in terms of achieving objectives of self-reliance, and that new ways of thinking of assisting refugees in self-settled situations are required.

As discussed, relative invisibility of Casamance refugees as a result of their living in host border villages rather than camps makes assistance challenging and goes a long way to disguising the 'problem' faced by international donor agencies, local NGOs and by refugees themselves and host communities. However, settling in host villages rather than in camps provides the platform for refugees to more quickly integrate and rebuild their lives and has been shown above to be the preferred option of refugees themselves. But this study has shown that much of the 'burden' of Casamance refugees in The Gambia is borne by host villagers. It is therefore central to the matter of self-settled refugees that they be fully assisted to achieve self-reliance, as failure to do so pulls the host into a similarly vulnerable situation serving to magnify the 'problem'.

The difficulty of accessing self-settled refugees due to their mobility has been identified by donors themselves as a challenge for assistance. Part of this difficulty may stem from viewing assistance to self-settled refugees from the camp model and holding on to the 'care and maintenance' model of refugee protection (Gallagher, 1989).

Knowing where Casamance refugees are and how many are present becomes less important if refugees are viewed holistically as part of a community rather than as individual refugees or refugee families. The focus might then become a focus on supporting entire communities that are known to host refugees, rather than seeking out individual refugees or refugee families and the host with whom they may live. This would require management of resources by the community, but there is evidence they are able to manage material supplies previously given by donors, even though managing financial aspects of projects has seen less success. Support may include re-training programmes, including basic level business know-how, followed by micro-grant arrangements to encourage particularly women to start small enterprises.

That camps which arguably promote dependence through their very context of organized refugee-ism, have given way to a host village situation which encourages self-reliance and integration, sounds very positive. However benefits of a self-settled situation have been diluted in this instance by an insufficient period of highly managed transition from food aid to sustainable livelihood programming and insufficient resources for re-building livelihoods. This is an area which warrants future research into how to make effective transition from the emergency period and what local infrastructure is required to effectively manage sustainable livelihood programmes which replace emergency aid in the self-settled situation.

Food security was constantly cited by refugee respondents as their priority. Initially in interviews respondents would put their case for us giving food or advocating on their behalf for food supplies. However, on discussion with respondents, the majority agreed that they would prefer to be able to provide food themselves as they did in Casamance. That they have been unable to re-establish themselves is central to their ongoing request for food assistance.

Granted, a level of dependency and expectation has occurred due to past food aid distribution, but this paper has highlighted the interconnected matters of livelihoods, education and health which each contribute to overcoming the need for food assistance in self-settled situations and has shown how each impacts on the other to retain Casamance refugees in vulnerable dependent positions. Future research could examine ways in which education and health care could be delivered more effectively in self-settled situations, and could examine what other reasons exist, if any, for non-uptake of education and health care.

The conflict in the Casamance region cannot be described in any way as high profile outside the immediate region. There are no strategic interests for the West to defend and the numbers displaced are low in comparison to other refugee-producing conflicts (both globally and in Africa) and thus any destabilizing influence is relatively small (Crisp, 2003:3). It seems likely these are the reasons why the international community has not insisted a resolution to the Casamance conflict be found and why it will probably continue.

Since Crisp's article drew attention to the worsening position of refugees in protracted situations, the 'problem' remains a challenge to donors and receiving countries alike. Long term conflict and instability, albeit low level in the case of Casamance, produces a continuing stream of refugees. The aim of this paper has been to provide insight, through the case of Casamance refugees in The Gambia, to what refugees do in self-settled situations of exile, what they need, and the ways in which the approach to donor assistance may shift to provide a successful platform through which to facilitate, for refugees, a move away from vulnerability and uncertainty and the hope of return, to the reality of re-establishing self-reliance and achieving integration.

Although refugee numbers in this case are small relative to other refugee crises, it is nonetheless useful to better understand the dynamics of, and strategies within, self-settlement in the case of Casamance refugees and the specific challenges this case presents to donors and to receiving societies, in order to apply to other cases. Increased knowledge of this population is important in order to secure long term livelihood sustainability and successful integration here and elsewhere and to achieving goals related to poverty.

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