The Failure of Self-Reliance in Refugee Settlements

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Current responses to refugee crises confine refugees to organized settlements where they are stripped of their rights and dignity. The UNHCR has developed self-reliance policies in an attempt to address the long-term needs and economic security of refugees in settlements. However, these policies are self-serving, unambiguously focused on the reduction of material assistance in line with falling UNHCR budgets rather than addressing the real needs of refugees.

Refugee self-reliance is not possible within the current framework of UNHCR responses to refugee situations.

This paper will focus on the factors which restrict refugees’ abilities to exercise successful livelihoods, in themselves essential to self-reliance, and flaws within the UNHCR’s current self-reliance policies which undermine progress on this issue. Thus, this paper will make four arguments. First, the potential to achieve self-reliance is directly related to the degree to which asylum states extend and protect refugee rights. Second, the physical characteristics of organized refugee settlements are incompatible with the needs of refugees and hinder any attempts to engage in sustainable livelihoods. Third, current policy is unrealistically predicated on the belief that subsistence agricultural livelihoods can support refugee communities to achieve self-reliance. Finally, the UNHCR organization, constrained by the need to appeal to donors and asylum states, is consequently unable to adequately protect and respond to the needs of refugees.
Introduction

Despite the common perception that refugee situations are a temporary phenomenon, lengthy protracted refugee situations are quickly becoming the norm. “[A] protracted refugee situation is one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile” (UNHCR 2004: 1, UNHCR 2005a: 7). Since 1993, the length of time spent in asylum countries has risen from an average of nine years to 21 years (UNHCR 2004: 1; UNHCR 2005a: 7). Repatriation has long been the ‘solution’ to refugee crises, returning refugees to their countries of origin where the responsibility for protection is removed from the international community. However, as the causes of refugee situations have become increasingly ‘intractable’, repatriation has become an increasingly distant option. The lengthening of refugee situations poses a serious challenge to the current refugee assistance policies. Few donors or host countries have or are willing to provide the necessary resources to meet refugees’ needs beyond the initial emergency phase, and consequently the welfare of refugees in protracted situations is deteriorating.

In view of declining donor interest in sustaining refugee camps, that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has sought to relieve budgetary pressures by any means possible. Linking refugee assistance with development policy, the UNHCR’s promotion of refugee self-reliance was devised as a low cost option of capturing the interest of donors who are increasingly focused on long-term development, while simultaneously assisting refugees to meet their own needs. However, this shift does not represent a fundamentally new approach to refugee policy and refugees remain confined to organized settlements, stripped of their rights and dignity. In its current form, the UNHCR’s self-reliance policy is self-serving. Though couched in terms of the potential benefits to refugees, the key focus of self-reliance policy is unmistakably the reduction of material assistance in line with falling UNHCR budgets. The effects are paradoxical. Refugees are expected to exercise rights they do not have to achieve a degree of
independence which is not even expected of local populations in the same context and without access to the bare minimum of resources. Refugee self-reliance is not possible within the current framework of UNHCR responses to refugee situations.

Self-reliance is a complex issue. It is not possible to identify one or two factors which are uniquely responsible for the success or failure of refugees to achieve real and meaningful self-reliance. Instead, this paper will focus on the constraining factors which restrict refugees’ abilities to exercise successful livelihoods, which are essential to self-reliance, and the flaws within the UNHCR’s current self-reliance policies which undermine progress on this issue. Thus, this paper will put forward four principal arguments. First, refugee self-reliance is directly related to the degree to which asylum states extend and protect refugee rights. The protection of refugee rights determines all aspects of the UNHCR’s responses to refugee situations including whether refugees are to reside in camps or settlements, or whether they have the freedom to choose their own place of residence. Second, the physical characteristics of organized refugee settlements are incompatible with the needs of refugees and hinder any attempts to engage in sustainable livelihoods. The implementation of organized settlements is fundamentally predicated on the assumption that refugee rights and essential needs are equal around the world, but this is clearly false and the standardized approach to refugee settlements ignores essential contextual issues which shape the productive capacity of refugee settlements (Herz 2007: 4). Third, settlement and self-reliance policy is overwhelmingly and unrealistically founded on the notion that refugees can become self-reliant from subsistence agricultural livelihoods alone. Yet, subsistence livelihoods are fundamentally at odds with long-term meaningful self-reliance and the limitations imposed on refugees’ access to non-agricultural livelihoods threatens the sustainability of refugee settlements. Finally, the structure of the UNHCR organization limits its ability to develop autonomous policies which reflect the best interests of refugees. The UNHCR is constrained by the need to appeal to donors and asylum states and consequently its policies fail to adequately protect and meet the needs of refugees.
The UNHCR’s practice of promoting self-reliance is not new. Since the 1960s, the UNHCR has favoured the creation of agricultural-based settlements whose design is intended to allow refugees to become self-sufficient, supporting themselves through small-scale food production. Despite overwhelming evidence that these settlements fail to produce anything which approximates real and meaningful self-reliance, the UNHCR continues to implement self-reliance strategies today just as it has done in the past. As the UNHCR is intended to be an entirely non-political organization it tends to take an organizing and advocating role in refugee issues as opposed to direct involvement in the provision of assistance. Thus, while the UNHCR has had a critical role in formulating self-reliance policies, most decisions regarding practical aspects of refugee protection are left to host states and the implementing partners chosen by the UNHCR. For example, while the UNHCR has the responsibility of allocating funds and coordinating humanitarian responses to refugee crises, it is its implementing partner, the World Food Programme (WFP), which is responsible for managing the provision of refugee food rations and undertaking critical food security assessments which in turn form the basis of the UNHCR’s determination of refugee self-reliance.

Owing to the ongoing use of camps and refugee settlements as virtually the sole method of delivering assistance in sub-Saharan Africa, the focus of this paper will be on refugee settlements in this region. Examples will be drawn from refugee settlements in a number of countries but particular attention will be given to the effects of restrictive asylum laws in Kenya and specific efforts to promote self-reliance in Northern Uganda. Accessing qualitative and quantitative data on refugees in sub-Saharan Africa has, and continues to be a serious challenge for researchers. This paper makes use of a number of sources but is principally reliant on publications of the UNHCR for statistics and demographic information on refugee situations. Of particular concern with regards to sources and UNHCR involvement in settlements is the widely acknowledged fact that the UNHCR does not undertake extensive or regular evaluations of its programmes. Thus, where possible, academic research has been utilized to supplement or challenge the findings of official UNHCR policy papers. With regards to the Ugandan case study, the publications of the
Refugee Law Project at Makerere University have been invaluable as a critical assessment of the findings published by the UNHCR and the Government of Uganda.

The structure of this paper is divided into six sections and attempts to reflect the logical progression of factors constraining the realization of self-reliance in refugee settlements. The first section will address critical background information on self-reliance in UNHCR policy and refugee definitions. The second section will contrast refugee rights in international law and in asylum state practice. The third section will provide an overview of the two case studies, Kenya and Uganda, which will be repeatedly referred to throughout the paper. Each of the subsequent sections will address the constraining factors on the development of self-reliance, the physical features of settlements, the focus on agricultural production, and the UNHCR organization itself.

1. Self-Reliance and Refugee Definitions

Definitions matter in refugee policy. Definitions determine who is eligible for assistance, how assistance is delivered, and with what aim. This section will address the definition of ‘self-reliance’ within UNHCR policy and ‘refugee’ within international law.

1.1. Self-reliance in UNHCR Policy

Self-reliance is a concept which, broadly speaking, explores the individual’s ability to provide for their needs. Many scholars and development practitioners have long recognized the benefits of allowing refugees to pursue strategies which promote economic participation and sustainable livelihoods, as such activities are crucial to human dignity and long-term well-being. The UNHCR’s *Handbook for Self-Reliance* (2005) defines self-reliance as,

> the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and
education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity. Self-reliance, as a programme approach, refers to developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern, and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian/external assistance. (UNHCR 2005b: 1)

The concept of self-reliance in itself is positive, highlighting the need to protect human rights which are the foundation for successful livelihoods which allow “individuals, households and communities [to] cope with or recover from stress and shocks, maintain capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable opportunities for the next generation” (UNHCR 2005b: 16). Furthermore, the emphasis within self-reliance on the long-term fulfilment of needs is compatible with the lengthy nature of most refugee situations and the effects this produces on refugee welfare. As an end in itself, real and meaningful self-reliance can make a genuine contribution to refugee well-being. However, under the UNHCR’s current refugee policy, self-reliance is promoted not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to achieve other ends, namely the reduction of expenses and the promotion of durable solutions.

Comprehensive strategies which encompass the promotion of a combination of durable solutions [...] as well as actions and responses that seek to effectively and constructively manage the time spent by refugees in exile, are therefore essential. [...] They need to be situation-specific, multidimensional and timely in order to prevent refugee situations from becoming protracted and to prevent lives and natural and financial resources from being wasted (UNHCR 2005c: 2).

The emphasis on durable solutions in the UNHCR’s approach to self-reliance reflects perhaps the single most important obstacle to achieving self-reliance, host states’ fears that refugees who are more independent will wish to remain permanently in the asylum country. However, the majority of scholars and indeed the UNHCR itself would argue that there is no basis in fact for this fear. “People who have benefited from education, skills training and livelihood opportunities during their time as refugees, and who have been able to attain a degree of self-reliance while living in a country of asylum, retain their hope in the future and are better placed to create and take advantage of new economic opportunities after their
return” (UNHCR 2008a: 10). Thus, it is argued that repatriation may actually be made easier in cases where refugees have been able to maintain and build upon their skills and assets. In all refugee situations there will be those who will feel unable to return to their countries of origin, however, in contrast to host state fears, it is more likely that those who have remained destitute and dependent on relief in camps or settlements for extended periods of time will most struggle to find the resources to repatriate. Thus, promoting self-reliance in asylum countries may help refugees to acquire the skills which will not only help them to achieve a successful return but will also be beneficial in their own right.

Yet, self-reliance cannot occur in all situations. “Self-reliance can, however, only be achieved if there is an enabling environment. This includes a viable economic situation, availability of affordable housing or access to land, as well as receptive attitudes within the host community” (UNHCR 2002b: 3). Self-reliance requires respect for refugee rights and it is, therefore, incompatible with contexts where refugees are confined to camps without freedom of movement and where their economic activities are circumscribed. Before discussing what rights refugees have under international law it is first necessary to understand who is a ‘refugee’ and how this status is recognized.

1.2. Refugee Definitions

The definition of ‘refugee’ forms the basis of refugee policy, determining who is eligible for protection and assistance. The recognition of refugee status is a political decision and has a significant impact on refugees’ ability to develop successful livelihoods and meaningful self-reliance. Within refugee law there are several definitions of ‘refugee’. The most influential and respected definition comes from the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, where refugee is defined as a person who, owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR 1951, Article 1.a.2).
Though this document was the first to provide a substantive definition of the term ‘refugee’ and establish the rights and duties of persons holding such status, the 1951 Convention was very much a product of the post-war environment, recognizing the need to protect against the persecution of individuals in Europe, but going no further than this. In 1967, the UN recognized the limitations of this definition, particularly in view of ongoing political conflicts and colonial wars of independence outside of Europe, and the tendency of these to displace large populations (Loescher 2001: 113). Consequently, the United Nations (UN) produced the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees which eliminated the provision that refugees must have fled events occurring on the European continent prior to 1951 (UNHCR 1967, Article 1.2).

Yet, text of the Protocol had significant weaknesses, principle among these being the lack of acknowledgement that, more often than not, modern refugees are not individually persecuted but rather flee generalized violence (Stein 1994: 50-51; Crisp 1995: 22). Thus, while large numbers of people might flee civil war, if the text of the 1967 Protocol is applied literally most of these would not be granted refugee status or access to the protection and assistance it affords. In 1969, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) attempted to correct this deficiency, releasing the Convention on Refugee Problems in Africa. This Convention defined refugee as a person who, “owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality” (OAU 1969, Article 1.2).

The essential dilemma within the definition of ‘refugee’ is whether this term denotes a condition, the fact of being outside of one’s country of nationality owing to fear of violence or persecution, or whether it denotes a status or label which is conferred upon an individual. To state it differently, it is the difference between an objective state of affairs or a subjective decision on the part of a governmental authority. The UNHCR’s 2008 Global Trends Report argues that ‘refugee’ denotes a condition, “a person is a refugee from the
moment he/she fulfils the criteria set out the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The formal recognition of someone, […], does not establish refugee status, but confirms it” (UNHCR 2009: 14). However, the treatment of refugees and provisions within the two Conventions and the 1967 Protocol outlining the circumstances permitting withdrawal of status would seem to challenge this view. The purpose of this paper is not to debate this issue, but it is essential to be aware of these contradictions as they affect virtually all aspects of refugee’s lives.

While the definition of ‘refugee’ may be a legal matter, the recognition of refugee status is entirely political and different modes of recognition may substantially alter refugees’ rights, duties, and potential to achieve self-reliance. In many ways, the manner in which refugees are recognized and identified by host states is more important than the definition of ‘refugee’ itself. One can identify four ‘degrees’ of refugee recognition, these being, ‘prima facie’, asylum seeker, Convention, and unrecognized status. Quickly becoming the most common modes of refugee recognition is ‘prima facie’, or de facto status, “entails that refugees are recognised as refugees collectively, due to their nationality, and do not have to undergo individual refugee status determination” (Meyer 2006: 6). This occurs most commonly in cases where civil war compels large numbers to seek asylum in neighbouring states and provision of assistance is facilitated by simplified recognition processes. However, collective identification may prevent the recognition of particular protection needs of individuals thereby creating a situation where prima facie refugees become a second-class of refugees, and do not receive the same protection as those with full Convention status.

Where refugees enter a country which has not extended prima facie status to nationals of their country, they must seek asylum through official channels. “An asylum-seeker is an individual who has sought international protection and whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined” (UNHCR 2009: 14). Status determination for asylum seekers may be a lengthy process owing to the bureaucracy involved and the considerable numbers of requests. “More than 839,000 people submitted an individual application for asylum or refugee status in 2008. UNHCR offices registered nine per cent of those claims” (UNHCR
2009: 2). Though asylum seekers have the same rights as refugees under international law, in practice, countries continue to limit the freedom of movement and economic rights of this group. If the asylum claim is successful, full Convention status is granted either under the 1951 Convention or the 1969 OAU Convention in Africa. Refugees granted Convention status often must demonstrate verifiable threats of persecution against their person, which prevent them as individuals from returning to their state of origin. Convention status is widely respected and, perhaps because of its strict controls on status determination, it seems to convey a greater degree of legitimacy and permanence to refugee status. Consequently, in some, though not all, cases, refugees who have obtained Convention status may enjoy a greater access to rights and freedoms.

A final category which emerges in refugee crises is that of the ‘unofficial’ refugee, those individuals who are not recognized by the state but legitimately fulfil the criteria for refugee status. Unofficial refugees do not have the same legal rights or protection as registered refugee’s vis-à-vis the host government. Host state governments can and do occasionally classify individuals of this group of individuals as ‘illegal migrants’ and forcibly remove them from the country, a practice which has been frequently observed in South Africa (Landau 2006; Jensen, Steffen and Buur 2007). There is growing concern that refugee status is being determined by a requirement to reside in camps and organized settlements and, as a result, those deserving of protection but determined to avoid confinement are denied refugee status. This touches on the above debate between ‘refugee’ as a condition or a status, but is even more significantly linked to respect for and protection of refugee rights by asylum countries.

2. Refugee Rights in Law and Practice

The decision to guarantee or restrict refugee rights determines where and under what conditions refugees reside, the assistance which they receive, and their ability to engage in productive activities while in asylum. Though refugee rights are quite clearly stated in international law, any examination of refugee rights must find that it is the policies of
individual states, specifically their degree to which they adhere to the provisions of the 1951 Convention and other treaties, which ultimately establishes which opportunities and resources are available to refugees. This section will address two key substantive rights of refugees, freedom of movement and the right to pursue economic activities first by examining how they are protected in international law and second by demonstrating how these rights are frequently flouted by refugee hosting states.

2.1. Refugee Rights in International Law

The rights of refugees are principally set out in the 1951 Convention; however, refugees are equally protected by the rights of all human beings which are set out in a number of other declarations, of which the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESRC) will be of particular importance for this paper. The first right to be explored here, freedom of movement, is the right which, above all others, has the most pronounced impact on the lives of refugees. This right is expressed in Article 26 of the 1951 Convention; “Each Contracting State shall accord to refugees lawfully in its territory the right to choose their place of residence and to move freely within its territory subject to any regulations applicable to aliens generally in the same circumstances” (UNHCR 1951, Article 26). This principle is echoed with specific regard to Africa in Article 12(1) of the African Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights (1981) which “grants freedom of movement and residence to every individual within the borders of a state ‘provided he abides by law’ (Beyani 2000: 17; OAU 1981, Article 12.1). The spirit of these articles recognizes that the ability to choose one’s own place of residence and move unrestrictedly influences livelihoods, wellbeing and dignity.

The right to pursue economic activities and the right to work are addressed both within the 1951 Convention and the ICESCR. Article 17(1) of the 1951 Convention states that refugees should be given access to wage-earning employment on par with nationals of most-favoured nation status residing in the same country (UNHCR 1951, Article 17.1). Despite being acknowledged as a crucial component of human and refugee rights, the right
of refugees to pursue economic activities remains highly contentious. To give an example of the reluctance of states to comply with this provision, in 2002 twenty-five nations party to the 1951 Convention were found to have made a declaration or reservation specific to the provisions of this article (UNHCR 1951). Similarly contentious, Article 18 of the same Convention provides for the right of refugees to engage in self-employment, for example in agriculture or trade (UNHCR 1951, Article 18). These rights are again reinforced by provisions of the ICESCR, in which Article 6(1) states, “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right” (UN General Assembly 1966, Article 6.1). Article 6(1) of the ICESRC is not as contentious as the articles of the 1951 Convention, but this is likely due to a unique provision within the ICESCR which explicitly permits developing nations to restrict the economic rights of non-nationals within their borders. “Developing countries, with due regard to human rights and their national economy, may determine to what extent they would guarantee the economic rights recognized in the present Covenant to non-nationals” (Goodwin-Gill 1978: 68). It is not clear that this exception was intended to include refugees, who are often considered to be an exceptional category of migrants deserving of additional protection. Nevertheless, the ease with which refugee hosting state can and do restrict the economic rights of refugees has an enormous effect on refugees’ abilities to achieve self-reliance. The UNHCR’s current self-reliance policies advocate the extension of full rights and freedoms to refugees but do little to ensure that the barest minimum of rights protection necessary for the exercise of livelihoods exists.

2.2. Refugee Rights in Asylum State Practice

“[S]even out of ten refugees in sub-Saharan Africa reside in camps” (UNHCR 2009: 2) evidence that despite the provisions of these documents, refugee rights are not respected in sub-Saharan Africa. In practice, though restrictions of refugee rights are permitted only in cases of “war, or grave and exceptional circumstances” (UNHCR 1951, Article 9) it remains the discretion of the asylum state to what degree refugees are permitted freedom of
movement. Asylum states often justify restrictions on the basis of ‘national security’ for any and all rights which might otherwise encumber the state with additional duties and financial burdens. The use of encampment policies clearly demonstrates this. There are a number of reasons behind the use of camps and settlements, but fundamentally restrictions of refugee rights stem from a desire to control motivated by security fears and state interests. However, it has long been acknowledged that restricting refugee rights and encampment policies are not particularly conducive to maintaining control or security (Black 1998: 7). In seeking to control refugees’ activities by limiting their movement and access to resources, states may actually create environments conducive to the very insecurity and illicit activities they seek to avoid (Wilson 1992: 230).

Before examining any additional factors which constrain the realization of self-reliance it is necessary to review the case studies to better understand the practical effects of current refugee policy.

3. The Case Studies

Two case studies have been selected to highlight the potential for self-reliance in organized refugee settlements. Kenya is used to demonstrate the restrictive camp environment which prevents refugees from exercising any livelihood strategies. Meanwhile, Uganda observes a more liberal approach to refugee policy, employing dispersed settlements which nevertheless are founded on a flawed assumption that self-reliance can be achieved through subsistence agricultural production. This section will provide a brief overview of these cases.

3.1. Kenya:

Kenya is the most frequently cited example of encampment policies in sub-Saharan Africa, and it is widely believed to be the most restrictive of refugee rights. Though the Kenyan government has made every effort to prevent refugees from achieving self-reliance, the
manner in which refugee assistance is provided demands that refugees exercise economic activities to fulfill their needs. This contradiction is present in all situations where refugees are required to live in organized settlements but is particularly evident here. Consequently the Kenyan example is invaluable to the study of self-reliance. This case study will rely principally upon two studies, a joint report of the UNHCR and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on self-reliance in and livelihoods published in 2005, and an article by Montclos and Kagwanja (2000) about the ‘socio-economic dynamics’ of the camps published in the Journal of Refugee Studies. References will also be made to a wide range of other studies on the camps as well as current information published by Human Rights Watch and the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI).

As of 2008, Kenya was estimated to be supporting over 303,000 refugees, entirely housed in two remote refugee camps, Dadaab and Kakuma.1 Dadaab, located in Garissa District, is the larger, with a majority Somali population now approaching 270,000 refugees, while Kakuma, located in Turkana District, is considerably smaller with no more than 50,000 refugees who are mostly of Sudanese origin. Though both camps are over-populated, for the capacity of their facilities, the situation at Dadaab has long been in crisis; it currently houses nearly three times the number of refugees it was built to support and is now “among the oldest, largest and most congested camps in the world” (WFP 2009b: 6).

The Government of Kenya has demonstrated its lack of commitment to protecting even the most crucial of refugee rights, “the right not to be refouled – forcibly returned to a place where a person faces a threat to life or freedom on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (Human Rights Watch 2009b: 15). In 2008, USCRI claimed that Kenya refouled hundreds who were attempting to cross the Somali border (USCRI 2009). Not only are such actions a violation of international law, they are also in complete disregard of the provisions of the country’s 2006 Refugee Act which guarantees the right to seek asylum. “No person shall be refused entry into Kenya … if, as a result of such refusal … such person is compelled to return or

1 UNHCR Online Statistical Population Database; Though it is frequently referred to as one unit, Dadaab is actually a conglomeration of three camps, Ifo, Dahahaley and Hagara. The three camps are within 50 kilometres of Dadaab town from whence it gets its name.
remain in a country where … the person’s life, physical integrity or liberty would be threatened on account of … events seriously disturbing public order” (Government of Kenya Refugee Act 2006, Section 18b, as cited by Human Rights Watch 2009b: 16). Other attempts to stem the flow of new refugees into the country include the closure of the Kenya-Somalia border in January 2007. However, significant numbers of new refugees have continued to appear at Dadaab, and the border closure has meant that new arrivals at Dadaab are not registered, receive no assistance, and no materials to construct shelters, which has resulted in extremely poor living conditions (USCRI 2009; Human Rights Watch 2009c). Human Rights Watch reports that “tens of thousands of refugees arriving since August 2008, when the camps were declared full, have been forced to live on tiny, already-overcrowded plots of land belonging to refugees of longer duration or to build their own makeshift shelters outside the camps’ official boundaries” (Human Rights Watch 2009a).

In addition to flouting international law and the principle of non-refoulement, refugees’ freedom of movement and right to pursue economic activities are heavily restricted. The 1973 Alien Restriction Act authorized the Government to “requir[e] aliens to reside and remain within certain places or districts,” but permitted the exercise of this power only in times of war or “imminent danger or great emergency’ (USCRI 2005). In practice, however, all refugees have been confined to camps and reports as far back as the early 1990s describe instances wherein the homes of refugees living amongst the local population were demolished in order to force their removal to camps (Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 220). The Alien Restriction Act was replaced in May 2006 by the Refugee Act which continues to require refugees to reside in camps (USCRI 2009). Those refugees who violate the residency restrictions of the new law face heavily penalties including “fines up to 20,000 shillings (about $310), six months in prison, or both (USCRI 2009). Work permit fees and laws which prohibit refugees from undertaking permanent employment within the camps also effectively prevent refugees from legally entering the labour market. For those who can afford “work permits which cost 50,000 shillings (about $697) and are valid for two years” (USCRI 2009) a work permit does not constitute permission to travel outside of
the camps and travel passes, at an additional cost, are required. In sharp contrast to the policies of most states, Kenya also restricts employment of refugees within camps; refugees cannot enter into an employment contract or earn salaries (USCRI 2009). Refugees may be hired ‘temporarily’ by the UNHCR and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) but they receive only ‘incentives’, a dramatically lower wage compared to that received by Kenyans employed in similar positions. “For example, the Head Teacher of a Secondary School in one of the camps, being a refugee, receives an ‘incentive’ of 8.000 KSh/month while Kenyan Teachers working under him with a regular work contract receive a monthly salary of 36.000 KSh” (UNHCR and ILO 2005: 28). Montclos and Kagwanja (2000) appear to suggest that NGOs are inclined to employ refugees as much as possible as they can be paid lower ‘incentive’ wages; however, precise figures on refugee and Kenyan employment in the camps are not available (Montclos and Kagwanja 2000: 218).

A direct consequence of the Kenyan government’s highly restrictive refugee policy is that refugee well-being is compromised and populations at both camps have remained “dependent on WFP food assistance since 1991” (WFP 2009b: 3). Evidence to the fact that refugees are merely surviving is found in the poor heath of many refugees which is directly linked to insufficient diets. The WFP (2009b) Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRRO) for Kenya found that anaemia was “exceptionally high in both camps” where over 70 per cent of children are anaemic and the percentages of women with anaemia range from 31 to 66 between the camps. WFP rations do not include fresh foods, so refugees have little choice but to make do with what little they can produce with scarce resources (WFP 2009b: 7). Land for cultivation is not available to the refugees within or outside the camps and as a result all food production is done “on the few open spaces between shelters or on the verges of the main roads” (UNHCR and ILO 2005: 15). Prior to the arrival of the refugees, the region was sparsely populated; local people are mostly nomadic and engage in very limited “localised farming and animal husbandry” (UNHCR and ILO 2005: 15). The

2 See Table 4 of the Appendix for a ‘wealth group breakdown’ of the Dadaab camp population.
3 Exact percentages are Dadaab- Children under 5: 71%, pregnant women: 41%, non-pregnant women: 66%. Kakuma – Children under 5: 72%, pregnant women: 65%, non-pregnant women: 31% (WFP 2009b: 7). A very comprehensive discussion of malnutrition related illnesses in refugee situations is available from Keen (1992).
economies of the two regions have not dramatically improved since the arrival of refugees, and are largely supported by the ongoing humanitarian assistance and the jobs it creates at the local level. However, at the same time the continued presence of thousands of refugees in the region has placed added stress on local resources, creating tensions between refugees and the local population as traditional livelihoods are increasingly threatened. Any expectations that refugees can become self-sufficient under these conditions are either wildly optimistic or incredibly misguided.

3.2. Uganda:

Though having fewer refugees than Kenya, Uganda’s decision to implement a policy of local settlement instead of camps has meant that refugees are dispersed among several districts in over a dozen settlements. The dispersed nature of refugee settlements and the ongoing threat of insecurity in some regions have limited research opportunities. Consequently, research and policy evaluation has not to have been undertaken in all settlements, and where research has been conducted it often concerns policy success at the district level rather than comprehensive assessments of individual settlements. The Ugandan case study will concentrate on the implementation of the Self-Reliance Strategy in the northern districts, that said however, a significant amount of research is available on Nakivale settlement in the south which provides valuable insights into self-reliance in that region. The Ugandan case study draws on a wide variety of sources, but worth particular mention are the papers of the Refugee Law Project, in particular the evaluation of the settlement system by Kaiser, Hovil and Lomo (2005); Meyer’s (2006) study of self-reliance policy in practice; the final report and mid-term reviews of the UNHCR and Government of Uganda’s Self-Reliance Strategy; and a comprehensive study of Nakivale and Oruchinga settlements by Jones (2002).

Uganda has a long history of migration and refugee flows, particularly along its border with Sudan. With the resumption of the conflict in southern Sudan, Sudanese refugees and Ugandans who had previously taken asylum in southern Sudan began to arrive in northern
Uganda in the late 1980s. “Large influxes of Sudanese refugees did not occur until 1993-
94, when in a short time more than 100,000 Sudanese fled to Uganda” (Merkx 2002: 129)
Early local settlement schemes implemented to address this influx failed. “The settlement
scheme was implemented under pressure, which caused mistakes and confusion” (Merkx
2002: 130). Moreover, conflict in northern Uganda between the government and rebel
groups threatened the physical security of the refugees and prevented them from engaging
in productive activities (Merkx 2002: 130). At times whole settlements were forced to flee
the violence. Dryden-Peterson and Hovil (2003) found that “in Adjumani, for example,
[refugees] had become self-sufficient in terms of food production, [but] the upheavals of
recent attacks and violence have caused refugees to flee their fields and become once again
dependent on direct assistance” (Dryden-Peterson and Hovil 2003: 11).

The Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) was launched in 1999 by the UNHCR in cooperation
with the Government of Uganda, focusing on Moyo, Arua and Adjumani districts, where it
is believed that 72 per cent of Uganda’s refugee population resides (Meyer 2006: 19). The
SRS proposed to achieve refugee self-reliance, culminating with the withdrawal of food
rations for all but the most vulnerable groups, within a four year period while
simultaneously fostering regional development initiatives to improve the quality of life for
the whole population of the three districts (Meyer 2006: 50). Yet, this aim has never been
achieved. There are some who say that certain settlements have successfully given up food
rations but it is never made clear which settlements those are, how many people are
involved and how they are managing their own needs. Perhaps more accurately, the
majority of reports on refugee self-sufficiency indicate that most refugees receive reduced
rations, 40 to 60 per cent of the complete ration, and those who are more vulnerable receive
full rations (Kaiser 2006: 606). With regards to the provision of food rations, in 2005 de
Bruijn (2009) found that 65 per cent of those entitled to food rations in Kiryandongo
settlement did not receive them (de Bruijn 2009: 19). Meanwhile, in Uganda as a whole,
between 2005 and 2007 the percentage of those refugees entitled to rations who actually
received them varied from 56 to 82 per cent, “whereas in the other five countries [surveyed]
it has not been below 97 per cent” (de Bruijn 2009: 20). Moreover, refugees are still
extremely vulnerable to seasonal scarcity and environmental shocks, and irregular provision of inadequate rations can only serve to aggravate refugees’ ability to meet their own needs (UNHCR & Government of Uganda 2004: vi).

The demographics of the Ugandan refugee population are particularly interesting.\textsuperscript{4} Figures from 2008 place the number of refugees close to 172,000 however, in the past this figure has been in excess of 200,000 and it is estimated that there could be an additional population of unregistered self-settled refugees numbering close to 50,000.\textsuperscript{5} Refugees in Adjumani, Moyo, and Arua districts have a significant impact on the local economy “where they constitute, respectively, 36%, 15% and 5% of the total populations of these districts.”\textsuperscript{6} Unlike the Kenyan example, the size of the refugee population in northern Uganda has meant that refugees and locals live in close proximity, directly sharing the same resources and services (UNHCR & Government of Uganda 2004: 41). Moreover, the local population faces the same insecurity problems and high poverty levels as the refugee population. The north of Uganda also hosts 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) who reside in camps and settlements much like the refugees (UNHCR & Government of Uganda 2004: 1). As of 2007, 54 per cent of the refugee population was under 18 years of age, but in some settlements this figure is as high as 60 per cent of the total population. Moreover, in four settlements 20 per cent of the population is under five years of age (UNHCR 2008b, 116-117). Though the proportion of refugees under the age of 18 has been decreasing with each year, the significantly high number of individuals who are more or less ‘dependent’ on others for their needs has an enormous impact on the potential to achieve self-reliance.

Like Kenya, Uganda recently enacted a new refugee law in 2006, the Refugees Act, which came into force in May 2007. Under this law the right to freedom of movement in Uganda remains rather confusing. It is argued that Uganda’s settlement and self-reliance policies have “effectively redefined the category ‘refugee’ so that it has come to refer to a person

\textsuperscript{4} See Appendix Table 1 for additional information on individual camp populations.
\textsuperscript{5} UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database
\textsuperscript{6} UNHCR & Government of Uganda (2004: v) and Meyer (2006) provide slightly different breakdown of the refugee population by district. Table 2 in the Appendix replicates her findings.
who is in receipt of assistance and living in a physical space defined by the government of Uganda” (Kaiser, Hovil, & Lomo 2005: 4). Refugees may reside elsewhere in the country, but the process to receive identification of refugee status is more lengthy and complicated and no assistance is provided to those residing outside of the settlements. “The Refugees Act 2006 guarantees freedom of movement to refugees in Uganda, but [...] aid is limited to those living in settlements. Refugees who wish to leave [the settlements] have to request movement permits from administrators and provide dates and reasons for travel” (USCRI 2009). This would appear to suggest that refugees have freedom of movement, but only if they choose not to reside in official settlements. Once residing in settlements, freedom of movement is restricted to prevent refugees from claiming assistance who do not reside in the settlements. Employment and economic rights are similarly confused. Refugees were previously required to obtain work permits to undertake employment. However, it appears that the new Refugees Act does not require refugees to obtain permits and extends to them the same economic rights as nationals (USCRI 2008). Nevertheless, it is not clear to what extent these changes have affected refugees’ employment potential.

The SRS is hailed as a success in UNHCR policy papers. However, there are a number of indications, not least that the SRS failed to achieve its principal objective of attaining food self-sufficiency, which suggest that refugee welfare has not been dramatically improved. De Bruijn highlights some very serious concerns with regards to the failure of the SRS to maintain the UNHCR’s minimum standards. Only 11 per cent of settlements in Uganda were providing the minimum amount of water for refugees, 20 litres per person per day. Instead the average amount of water provided was only 14 litres. Furthermore, zero per cent of settlements met the UNHCR standard for the average number of persons sharing water point, and similarly, less than half of Uganda’s refugee population lived within 200 metres of a water point though the standard calls for 100 per cent. These findings highlight the fact that refugee communities are not only unable to meet the minimum standards deemed to be necessary for an acceptable standard of living, but they have also proved unable to improve their access to resources in the long-term.

7 a table summarizing these findings adapted from de Bruijn’s (2009: 29) article is available in the Appendix
As the SRS came to a close in 2003 at the end of its four year mandate, the UNHCR and the Government of Uganda launched the Development Assistance to Refugee-Hosing Areas project (DAR) with a view to building on the achievements of the SRS. DAR essentially continues the aims of achieving refugee self-reliance, but applies a broader approach to integrating refugee assistance within local development initiatives. This paper will not specifically address the DAR policy, but an insightful critique is available from Meyer (2006).

4. Self-reliance and the Structure of Organized Settlements

The physical structure of organized refugee settlements is determined by the decision to restrict refugees’ rights and freedoms. This section will address how the standardized approach to the design and implementation of organized settlements undermines refugee well-being and long-term self-reliance potential.


For the most part, organized refugee settlements around the world share a standardized plan, regardless of whether that plan is suitable in any given context. “Based on the belief that human rights and human needs are valid and identical all over the world, the fundamental planning approach for camps is characterized by neutrality” (Herz 2007: 4). However, this view ignores the reality that the degree to which refugee rights are protected varies substantially between countries, as well as the effects of the physical environment of refugee hosting regions on the welfare of refugees. In Kakuma refugee camp, Jamal (2000) argues, that the UNHCR’s standardized approach and preoccupation with attaining ‘minimum standards’ results only the bare minimum of refugees’ short-term survival needs being met, thwarting long-term health and human dignity. The standards for shelter are a

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8 Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda website
9 Minimum standards pertain to those sectors (security, shelter, water, food, health, sanitation) upon which human survival depends, and which, if not met, will seriously affect a person’s health and could lead to death.
prime example of how minimum standards and the technical approach are not synonymous with refugee welfare. At Kakuma refugees have lived under tents and plastic sheeting for an extended period of several years with little effort by the UNHCR to promote or erect more permanent housing. Absurdly, though these tent structures do little to shelter refugees from the harsh climate, they meet the UNHCR’s standards for adequate shelter which Jamal indicates is measured by space rather than quality or suitability. At Kakuma “it seems that the number of square metres/person/shelter is 4.7, just above the minimum requirement” (Jamal 2000: 20).

The standardized plan of refugee camps and settlements ignore the needs of refugees. Refugees are not a uniform group; each household varies in size, number of dependents, physical ability and personal resources, all of which combine to determine the households’ needs and capacity to meet those needs. Yet, everything from the layout to the size of plots of land for individual households is predetermined based on what is believed to be ideal, ignorant of the socio-political, environmental and demographic realities of individual refugee crises. “The standardized plan for such a refugee camp starts with the tent or the refugee family as the smallest basic unit. [...] This unit of the family is organized into camp clusters (16 tents), camp blocks (16 clusters), camp sectors (4 blocks) and finally the complete camp (4 sectors), which in its ‘ideal’ case houses 20,000 refugees” (Herz 2007: 4). Refugee settlements share the same fundamental structure as camps but differ on three points. Briefly, refugee settlements provide households with larger plots on which to construct dwellings, individual households are allocated a plot of land on which they are expected to produce their own food, and the rights of refugees tend to be somewhat more respected. The amount of cultivable land allocated to refugees varies significantly between settlements, sometimes five acres of land, but occasionally as little as one or two acres. While in some cases this variation may take into account the productive capacity of the land, in many others the size of the plots are determined purely by the quantity of land available with little thought to how this may affect refugees.

Minimum standards are absolute inasmuch as they vary only slightly to account for different physical needs.” Jamal (2000: 11)
At the UNHCR level, there does not appear to be any significant concern regarding the negative effects of this technical approach, others, however, are extremely critical, noting that ignorance of local contexts can have devastating implications for refugee protection. Herz (2007), for example, expresses outrage at the level of research and planning which goes into these settlements; “there are only eleven pages in one single book that describes planning strategies for refugee camps. [...] the engagement with the theme is on a purely technical level only” (Herz 2007: 4). Herz cites the case of Chad, where the camp ‘architects’ were apparently ignorant of the fact that the location they had chosen for a new camp was forested, thereby “making their ‘neutral’ plan close to unusable” and requiring extensive deforestation (Herz 2007: 4). To ignore these essential points in the design and implementation of settlement policy directly undermines refugee protection. If the realization of refugees’ basic needs is obstructed at even this initial stage, it is unclear how refugees can be expected to later exercise the necessary productive activities to maintain a standard of living which even international donors struggle to provide.

4.2. Location of Organized Settlements

The location of refugee settlements has an enormous impact on refugees’ ability to exercise economic livelihoods, determining what resources, services and environment refugees will have access to and experience.

Even if refugees experience no restrictions of rights beyond the requirement to reside in organized settlements, the location of settlements may effectively prevent refugees from exercising those rights. Land for organized settlements is negotiated from refugee hosting states by the UNHCR. By allocating refugees land which is underused, states tend to place refugees in remote, sparsely populated areas, where local services and resources are underdeveloped. It should be fairly evident from the outset that vacant land is unused for a reason, often because the productive capacity of the land is compromised by poor soil or other factors such as climate or pests. While the size of the agricultural plots is important, refugees who are given large plots with poor quality sandy soils lacking essential nutrients
will not be as successful, all other things being equal, as those with small plots of good quality land. Thus, from the outset, the potential success of self-reliance based on agricultural livelihoods is severely constrained. Moreover, regions in which refugees are allocated land tend to lack transportation and communication infrastructure, diversified markets, and well-established health and education services, all factors which “stifle the productivity and thus the economic welfare of refugees, causing them to live in poorer conditions than is necessary” (Werker 2007: 461). Werker (2007) best explains how these factors interact.

The types of policies that refugees face and the isolation (or lack thereof) of the camp combine to form the ‘institutional environment,’ or the basic rules and constraints, of the camp. Here, many economic determinants such as transport costs, transaction costs, information costs, risks of expropriation, and violation of fee schedules are determined. In addition, these determinants affect malleable outcomes, such as the attractiveness of investment, the type of production and labour within the camps and the relative prices of goods inside the camps (Werker 2007: 474).

On the whole, the ‘institutional environment’ of organized settlement tends to be negative, and the most visible effects are economic, found in refugees’ access to markets. “Isolating a market is effectively equivalent to making it smaller. And if the market is poor and capital-starved to begin with, its isolation and small size will prevent its participants from specializing, which reduces overall productivity and purchasing power” (Werker 2007: 466). The isolation of the market and the dependence of refugees on assistance as their main source of income also renders refugees extremely vulnerable to external shocks, “even minor interruptions in food supply then have highly damaging effects upon the wider refugee economy because people quite literally have to ‘eat their capital’ (Wilson 1992: 228). The isolated location of refugee settlements also produces effects on a number of non-economic levels, particularly with regards to the development and capacity of local services. While access to services may be improved by investments from humanitarian assistance, these services are not always sustainable. As humanitarian agencies pull-out of settlements, over time lack of funding causes services to collapse, leaving refugees with
virtually no access to essential health and education services. The remote and sparsely populated nature of the location of organized settlements means that district or regional governments tend not to have the capacity or state governments the willingness, to fund improvements in the long-term sustainability of services.

4.3. Prospects for Self-Reliance in Organized Settlements

Refugees in camps are not intended to become self-reliant; rather camps are intended to stifle such potential ostensibly with the aim of protecting the local people and resources. Nevertheless, despite the imposition of restrictions intended to restrict refugees’ actions, refugees are still expected to provide for many of their non-food needs which are not met in basic rations. The inability of refugees in camps to become self-reliant and their reluctance of refugees to relinquish assistance have led many to accuse refugees of laziness and a willing dependence on the international community to provide for their needs. Yet, so called ‘dependency syndrome’ is rejected by many academic researchers. Most refugees engage in economic activities where possible in spite of low returns and high risks. “Our findings showed that the determinant factor for whether a refugee family engaged in farming was the nature of the physical environment; it had nothing to do with the refugee’s motivation” (Kibreab 1993: 342). Few have reflected on the idea that the restriction of refugee rights, which subsequently demands the institutionalization of organized settlements, is responsible for limiting access to economic opportunities, increasing competition for scarce resources, and creating an artificial environment where ‘normal’ or customary livelihood strategies are not possible. The location and structure of refugee camps ensure that reliance on assistance is an essential coping strategy as refugees in camps are fundamentally not able to provide for all of their needs.

Refugee settlements, in contrast, tend to reflect a greater awareness of refugees’ own abilities and the effects restricting rights has on stifling those abilities. Nevertheless, while refugee settlements are designed to allow refugees greater freedom so that they may become less of a ‘burden’ on the state and international community, the use of organized
settlements still reflects a desire to control the movements of refugees and segregate them from the local population. The use of refugee settlements in place of camps therefore does not represent a dramatic improvement in rights protection.

It is not simply a neutral fact that refugees tend to be impoverished and that, needing assistance, they go and stay in settlements where this is provided for them. Rather, the structure of political and institutional response to refugees in Uganda constructs a situation where refugees’ own capacities, potential, and comparative advantages may effectively be stripped away from them, and that serviced settlements are represented as the answer to their problems (Kaiser, Hovil, Lomo 2005: 35).

By limiting the opportunities available to refugees, settlements simultaneously limit refugees’ abilities to cope with economic hardship. Unable to move freely, refugees are forced to accept what land is provided for them. Unable to exercise a full range of economic pursuits in poverty stricken settlements, refugees are forced to subsist on what they can produce. Unable to meet all of their needs through economic pursuits, large portions of refugee populations become increasingly impoverished, forced to sell their assets and neglect long-term needs for demands of the present. Kibreab’s (1989) survey of refugee settlements in Africa provides valuable insight into the potential success of self-reliance strategies. Of a total of 106 settlements established during between 1962 and 1982, Kibreab reveals that only 36 had achieved some degree of self-sufficiency during their existence. Moreover, Kibreab is unable to determine what constituted ‘self-sufficiency’ in the UNHCR’s definition though it is likely that it was based on a predetermined decision to terminate food rations as refugees began to produce their own food. Of the total, only 83 settlements remained open at the conclusion of Kibreab’s study. Twenty-one settlements had closed prior to 1982 as refugee repatriation had made them redundant, including seven of the settlements which had been identified as having achieved self-sufficiency. A further two settlements “were abandoned [...] owing to viability problems” (Kibreab 1989: 481). In 1982, Kibreab found that all but nine of the 29 ‘self-sufficient’ settlements which remained open required urgent UNHCR intervention owing to “some financial problems such as a lack of ability to meet recurrent and refurbishing costs’
Reflecting on these findings, it is concerning, though not surprising, that only one third of settlements attained a degree of ‘self-sufficiency’, over half of which requiring significant re-investment at a later date. This study suggests that, though these settlements had achieved ‘self-sufficiency’ at some point there were additional factors which prevented refugee settlements from permanently sustaining self-sufficiency. The impermanence of self-sufficiency in these cases likely reflects one or more of the following, improper evaluation of self-sufficiency based on flawed criteria; precipitate assessment of the existence of successful self-sufficiency; or the fact that self-sufficiency cannot occur in organized settlements.

5. Self-reliance and Agricultural Livelihoods

The purpose of refugee settlements in current responses to refugee crises, beyond immediate protection, is to facilitate agricultural production with the aim of achieving refugee food self-sufficiency. However, the previous sections have demonstrated that both the underlying restrictions of refugee rights behind use of organized settlements and their physical characteristics severely constrain the abilities of refugees to exercise any livelihood strategies including agricultural production. Self-reliance potential in refugee settlements is limited before refugees even arrive in organized settlements. Furthermore, beyond food self-sufficiency, individual households and entire communities must also provide for their non-food, healthcare and education needs, as well as discharge the long-term maintenance of the settlement infrastructure. The expectation that refugees can meet these needs through subsistence agricultural production is fundamentally flawed.

The ability of refugees to successfully engage in agricultural livelihoods is determined by a number of fixed criteria. In addition to the issues of settlement location, and quality and quantity of land highlighted above, a critical issue in refugee self-reliance is the demographics of individual households. A UNHCR report evaluating food security in Guinean refugee camps identified that, based on minimum household expenditures and extensive analysis of refugee incomes it was unrealistic to expect that one working adult
could support more than two dependents under the best of conditions. “[A]n able worker in the age range of about 20-44 years, who was not employed by an NGO or doing bigger business, could support him/herself and at most two dependents. Thus, any household with an able-adult to dependent ratio less than 1:2 was probably vulnerable—unless someone in the household was working for an NGO or was successful in business or trade” (UNHCR 2002a: 38-39). The ideal household with a maximum of two dependents per working adult is not very common. Jones (2002), in a study of Nakivale and Oruchinga settlements in southern Uganda found that at Oruchinga, “The average household has 4.5 children under 14” (Jones 2002: 22). Further, of those surveyed by Jones, the incidence of single headed households was extremely high and 32 per cent of youths were orphans living alone (Jones 2002: 22). Nakivale, a larger and more diverse settlement, similarly provides an example of a non-standard household structure. While the average Rwandan and Burundian household had 4.5 children, Jones cites Red Cross statistics which suggest that Somali households in the settlement had 13 children on average (Jones 2002: 43). This is of critical importance for self-reliance strategies. Households with a high dependent-to-provider ratio will struggle to meet their needs. This is particularly true of agriculture-based livelihoods which are incredibly labour intensive and whose returns are unpredictable and irregular. Household composition matters for three reasons. Households which cannot invest sufficient labour into the land will not be able to exercise successful livelihoods. Households which are unable to cope with irregular income will suffer economically and are more likely to turn to wage-labour or more predictable sources of income as their primary livelihood strategy, reducing the amount of time they can dedicate to their own plots of land. Moreover, distorted markets and food prices threaten long-term sustainability of subsistence farming ventures and, consequently, refugee self-reliance. Countless studies demonstrate that despite all their economic activities, and even before access to food rations and internationally funded services are withdrawn, refugees in settlements are merely surviving (Meyer 2006: 51). Moreover, long-term, subsistence livelihoods are linked to decreasing standards of living and increasing vulnerability to external shocks. This vulnerability is amplified when entire communities are dependent on the same source of
livelihood, particularly as subsistence agriculture does little to support the creation of strong and diversified markets.

Refugee settlements also rely on the assumption that all refugees possess the skills and knowledge to be successful subsistence farmers. This is quite evidently not the case for all individuals. Herz (2007) highlights how refugees in Chad have struggled with this assumption.

Many of the refugees [...] have previously practiced a craft or ran small shops. Other refugees are nomads [...] and have been raising large cattle herds. They don’t like vegetables they don’t want to grow vegetables, and don’t want to eat vegetables. Through a specific act of planning and a simple design move, those nomadic and village societies are being made into vegetable farmers (Herz 2007: 6).

A second example of this is found in Uganda where it was found that some Sudanese refugees had remained in transit camps for over ten years as their previous pastoralist livelihoods clashed with the agricultural focus of the settlements (UNHCR & Government of Uganda 2004: 6). Fundamentally, the provision of land ignores factors which may constrain refugees’ use of that resource. A joint food assessment mission (JFAM) undertaken by the UNHCR and the WFP found that “only 38% of the arable land in Imvepi/Rhino Camp was put to use in second season of 2002 and 56.6% in Moyo. This means that for various reasons, refugees are sometimes unable to utilize all the land put at their disposal which makes food self-sufficiency through own production more difficult to achieve” (UNHCR & Government of Uganda 2004: 14). Though the report was unable to identify the factors which caused land to go unused, the findings nevertheless highlight the ignorance of the expectation that refugees can gain their livelihoods solely through subsistence agriculture. Refugee settlement policy trivializes and underestimates the difficulties involved in successful agricultural livelihoods. Harrell-Bond’s (1986) study of refugee settlements in southern Sudan found that, for a variety of reasons, “21.3 per cent of the settlement population would never be able to support themselves through agriculture” (Harrell-Bond 1986: 262). Agricultural livelihoods require extensive knowledge of growing seasons, crops, soil quality, not to mention specific skills acquired through practice.
Moreover, agricultural production is heavily dependent on environmental and climactic conditions, therefore even refugees who have previous farming experience may struggle to adapt to new conditions in asylum countries. The assumption that refugees possess or can very quickly master the necessary skills to become successful small-scale farmers is extremely ignorant and is yet another example of the UNHCR’s tendency to implement standardized, one-size-fits-all policies without consideration of refugees’ own needs and the limitations imposed by particular contexts. Thus, self-reliance strategies, founded exclusively on agricultural production, may be poised for failure from the very outset of refugee crises.

The overreliance on agricultural production in self-reliance policies neglects to address the vulnerability of agricultural livelihoods to external shocks. This vulnerability has been observed in Uganda following a series of climactic shocks which have devastated food production in the region, resulting in visible negative impacts on refugees’ livelihoods and well-being (Meyer 2006: 22). External shocks of this kind strike all refugees simultaneously, if not equally, reducing the potential success of any coping strategies which might mitigate the damaging effects of short-term loss of production. Moreover, there is little which can be done to prepare for or prevent the effects of drought, flooding or pests and the artificial dependence of refugee communities on agricultural livelihoods which self-reliance policies have directly encouraged renders refugee settlements more vulnerable even to small shocks. Long-term, a consecutive series of shocks, even if they are minor and occur years apart, will reduce the resilience of local economies, both refugee and national, and rapidly deplete the assets of individual households. The settlement structure, constrained by the restriction of refugee rights, prevents refugees from exercising normal coping strategies, such as movement and livelihood diversification, which are available to national populations, disrupting the long-term viability of those communities. Moreover, where the UNHCR has the opportunity to promote alternative livelihood activities such as the development of skilled trades which recognize refugees’ previous livelihoods, these opportunities have been neglected, preventing the development of real and meaningful self-reliance.
Livelihood strategies, including agriculture, are rendered ineffectual by high levels of competition and lack of essential resources in refugee settlements. The artificially high populations of refugee settlements induce fierce competition both for scarce resources as inputs for livelihood strategies and also when it comes time to reap the benefit of, quite literally, the fruit of one’s labour. Unlike other livelihood strategies, agricultural livelihoods are constrained by the natural growing and harvesting seasons which determine when produce can go to market and when producers can expect income. In refugee settlements, this means that thousands of small-scale farmers sell their produce at the same periods. The effect of such high volume of sales in such a concentrated area drives down the price of foodstuffs. The lack of resources available to refugees constrains their ability to diversify their agricultural crop in ways which might mitigate some of the negative effects of competition. Moreover, refugees who are dependent on agricultural livelihoods are further disadvantaged in their terms of trade, as while reduced food prices undermine their incomes, high demand for fuel and items not produced within the settlement boundaries drives up the prices of essential non-food items. This is also seen in the provision of food rations to refugee camps. Wilson cites a case in Mozambique where refugees were forced to sell a large portion of their rations to purchase fuel to cook the food, “the cost of firewood to cook a meal using the type of beans provided was, in some areas of the country, several times higher than the value of beans being cooked” (Wilson 1992: 228). This highlights a dichotomy between what refugees can produce and what they consume. Often, settlement and self-reliance policy make the mistake of assuming that increased food production equates with increased food consumption. This is clearly not the case. “Numerous settlement refugees complained that there was never enough food to feed their households properly. As food rations have been incrementally reduced in the settlements [...] agricultural production has not been successful enough to meet the shortfall with respect to family consumption, as well as helping to meet non-food needs” (Kaiser, Hovil, Lomo 2005: 26). To fulfil all their diverse needs, refugees are frequently forced to sell a portion of their food to meet non-food needs; one cannot eat without first purchasing fuel to cook the food. Increased food consumption will only be directly linked to increased production where non-food needs are already fulfilled.
Wage-labour is often presented as an alternative livelihood strategy within refugee settlements. However, such activities are also constrained by the settlement environment and the increased competition it imposes. “The terms of trade for labour against food are crucial. Their labour is often all that refugees have to sell; but refugee influxes turn the terms of trade dramatically against it: wages are driven down, and food prices up” (Chambers 1979: 387). While refugees may be extremely disadvantaged by these circumstances, it is in fact those members of the local population who were dependent on wage-labour for their primary source of income prior to the arrival of refugees who suffer the most from declining wage-rates. Thus, while it is important to realize that the self-reliance potential of refugees is undermined by their inability to meet their most basic needs it is perhaps more important to recognize that policy decisions have wider implications for the sustainability of local markets and the self-reliance and livelihood strategies of the local populations, who, unlike refugees, have no recourse to international assistance.

6. Self-reliance failed by UNHCR structure

Though the UNHCR is the foremost organization representing the rights and welfare of refugees, there is a legitimate concern among many scholars that, given its dependence on international donors and asylum state cooperation, the UNHCR is not fully in control of its own policy. The UNHCR is limited in its ability to develop and implement best practices and refugee protection often becomes a game of achieving that which is possible now as opposed to what is in refugees’ best interest. Discussing refugee rights, Jamal (2000) summarizes this view best, explaining why the UNHCR so frequently compromises on what it knows to be essential for refugee well-being.

UNHCR tends to accept such trade-offs, mainly because, in an emergency, a camp is protection. […] To insist upon immediate freedom of movement for a large prima facie refugee caseload would probably be counterproductive as it would both antagonize most host states, and would make it harder for UNHCR to respond effectively, and to gauge accurately the size of the caseload (Jamal 2000: 8).
In many cases, the UNHCR evidences a real reluctance to fight for refugees’ best interests; another example of its desire to avoid political entanglements which it feels would tarnish its reputation. Yet, this desire to be ‘apolitical’ has been severely criticized, and is seen as a means to avoid responsibility for the treatment refugees receive and the conditions under which they live. “By shifting the responsibility to host government authorities, however, international agencies can and do side-step the ‘political’ issue of whether a policy of settlement in camps is a good one or not, and are able to confine their attention to more technical matters of camp layout, infrastructure and organization” (Black 1998: 6). Meyer (2006) shares this view, citing a criticism made by Crisp regarding the contradiction within the SRS between the technical focus of its aims and its minimal attention to refugee rights. “[Crisp’s] analysis reveals that self-reliance approaches have focused on institutional issues, questions of implementation and funding, at the expense of engagement with how such approaches could benefit refugees [...] and how such approaches also depend on refugees’ access to rights and protection” (Meyer 2006: 26). The SRS and policies like it fail to explore how the restrictions on refugee rights imposed by the host government affect refugees’ abilities to engage in successful livelihoods. The neglect and inaction of the UNHCR has lead the organization to be increasingly seen as weak and willing to compromise refugee welfare and refugee rights for host states’ cooperation.

Some might argue that the UNHCR is simply ‘making the best of a bad situation’; however, this is evidently not the case when one examines self-reliance policies at a deeper level. The UNHCR’s self-reliance strategy is entirely founded on the need to address budgetary short-comings rather than a dedication to improve refugee well-being. The UNHCR acknowledges the effects of financial constraints impose on its policy in the Handbook for Planning and Implementing Development Assistance for Refugees (2005) which suggests that the renewed interest in self-reliance is due in part to donors’ current preferences. “Donors are increasingly interested in providing development aid, rather than humanitarian aid, to support refugees in protracted crises. Self-reliance, as the basis for development, is likely to increase donor interest in a programme” (UNHCR 2005b: 7).
Meyer (2006) pushes this admission a step further, arguing that self-reliance under UNHCR policy is fundamentally “a reduction of material inputs, without any other substantive changes in refugees’ lives” (Meyer 2006: 50). A policy which claims to foster real and meaningful self-reliance but which simultaneously requires a reduction of essential external inputs is counter-intuitive and counter-productive. “[P]revious experiences of attempting self-reliance programs in refugee settlements have shown that self-reliance is a process that may require increased external inputs at certain points to enable refugees to access livelihood opportunities” (Meyer 2006: 26). Similarly, the emphasis on refugees’ abilities to meet ‘essential needs’ in the UNHCR definition of self-reliance is questionable. Real and meaningful self-sufficiency must go beyond immediate and short-term basic needs and allow refugees to plan for the future and invest in opportunities which in the long-term will improve their quality of life. The emphasis on ‘essential needs’ raises concerns that the UNHCR’s self-reliance strategies are not substantially different from other encampment policies. Moreover, the inability to address the long-term sustainability of refugee situations also highlights the UNHCR’s neglect of the temporal variable in refugee situations, that is, how refugees cope with changing needs over time.

Though the UNHCR has begun to acknowledge that refugee situations are becoming increasingly protracted, its policies fail to address how refugees’ needs change with time. For example, in settlements, refugees are provided with land to produce their own food. Yet, no attention is given to the issue of natural population growth and the provision of land for younger generations in the future. Similarly, the need to leave agricultural land fallow for a period of time after extended use is widely acknowledged, recognizing that continual use of land depletes the soil’s nutrients and reduces the productive capacity of the land. However, the UNHCR’s policies fail to address this, forcing refugees to farm increasingly infertile land. Moreover, if agricultural livelihoods are generally incapable of achieving more than short-term food self-sufficiency, the long-term needs of refugee settlements will go unaddressed. This has been observed in many refugee settlements, where water supplies have been jeopardized by an inability to repair pumps and maintain boreholes and reservoirs (Jones 2002; de Bruijn 2009). The neglect of the temporal variable also
highlights the UNHCR’s assumption that development progress is linear. It is assumed that refugee settlements will continue to become increasingly ‘developed’, experiencing greater quality of life, increased food production, increasing technological advancement and ongoing infrastructural development. However, development is not a straight line, it is extremely vulnerable to shocks and it can experience any number of twists or turns, both positive and negative. The mid-term review of the Self-Reliance Strategy in Uganda found that “the conceptualisation of self-reliance is over simplified in the document. [...] A major limitation in the conceptual approach is to assume that progress towards self-reliance was a linear process over time and [the SRS] did not factor in the effects of drought and other shocks” (UNHCR & Government of Uganda 2004: 10). Moreover, subsistence agricultural livelihoods are not conducive to long-term investment and innovation which is fundamental to sustainable development.

A deeper concern is that of long-term investment when viewed with regards to the dichotomy between self-reliance at the individual and community levels. While it may be relatively simple for households to achieve self-sufficiency on an individual level, especially in the short term, this is not the same thing as community self-reliance.

Self-reliance is largely seen from the perspective of the individual or household. But it is also essentially a community attribute – communities provide the social network required in times of adversity. Thus the existence and functioning of community structures and their capacities are an important component of self-reliance. Moreover, community organization has an important bearing on the equality of participation in development planning (UNHCR & Government of Uganda 2004: 18).

The UNHCR’s current self-reliance policy expects communities to become self-reliant yet fails to engage this subject beyond the individual or household level. Though refugee settlements have councils to represent their needs to the UNHCR, they lack the normal structures of taxation and governance which would normally be expected to plan, coordinate and raise funds to address future investment in and maintenance of public facilities. At the same time, these councils have little or no relationship with structures of
governance of the asylum state, and asylum states are wont to fund refugee communities which are ostensibly under the protection of the UNHCR. Despite recent rhetoric of the potential benefits of integrating refugee assistance and local development initiatives, both Meyer (2006) and Kaiser (2000) highlight the unwillingness of the Ugandan government to integrate the administration of refugee settlements into national governance structures. While it would be wrong and quite likely unsuccessful to impose artificial structures of governance and representation on refugee settlements, it is similarly imprudent to expect communities to thrive as islands within a foreign state with no real means of supporting themselves (Meyer 2006: 26).

Conclusion

The increasingly protracted nature of refugee situations demands a new approach to refugee protection which acknowledges the long-term repercussions of life in exile. Refugee self-reliance, the development of sustainable livelihoods within a framework which supports full and unrestricted refugee rights, presents an opportunity to restore refugees’ dignity and meaningfully improve conditions in asylum countries. However, the UNHCR’s current settlement and self-reliance policies do not represent a fundamental break with the past, and consequently are unable to deliver self-reliance. Self-reliance is not possible if asylum states continue confine refugees to camps and settlements where their rights are restricted and the settlement structure limits their opportunities to engage in economic activities. Local settlement policy and current self-reliance strategies place an unrealistic emphasis on the ability of subsistence agricultural production to meet the needs of refugee communities. The UNHCR continues to make the grave error of assuming food production is an indication of increased food consumption and, therefore, increasing economic security of refugee populations. Food security and self-reliance are two fundamentally different concepts, and though food security may contribute to self-reliance the continued assumption within UNHCR policy that they are equal can only serve to undermine refugees’ long-term welfare. Declining UNHCR budgets are no excuse for reduced assistance to refugee settlements. Reducing aid in
the attempt to stimulate self-reliance is negligent, counter-productive, and demonstrates a lack of attention to the real needs of refugees.

Current responses to refugee crises are failing. To achieve real and meaningful self-reliance the UNHCR must fundamentally alter its approach to refugee policy, recognizing the practical importance of refugee rights, changing the structure of refugee assistance, and ultimately altering its own role in the provision of assistance and advocacy of refugee issues. Self-reliance has the potential to radically improve refugee welfare, but not as it currently stands.
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**Website sources**

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www.unhcr.org - UNHCR Online Statistical Population Database
www.refugeevoices.com - US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
www.wfp.org - World Food Programme

**Appendix**

**TABLE 1: Demographic Indicators of Refugee Settlements in Kenya and Uganda.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Location Name</th>
<th>Demographic indicators 2007</th>
<th>TOTAL POP. END 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>share of age group in total</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>0 to 4</th>
<th>5 to 11</th>
<th>12 to 17</th>
<th>under 18</th>
<th>18 to 59</th>
<th>60+</th>
<th>female</th>
<th>2009 Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Dadaab**</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Dagahaley (Dadaab)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Hagadera (Dadaab)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Ifo (Dadaab)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Kakuma</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Nairobi*</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Adjumani</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Ikafe</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Impevi</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Kiryandongo</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Kyaka II</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Kyangwali</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Madi Okollo</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Nakivale</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Oruchinga</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Palorinya</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Rhino Camp</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Kampala*</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Both Kampala and Nairobi locations represent urban based refugees

** It is not clear what "Dadaab" refers to. The three refugee camps in Garissa region are listed, Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo. These three camps are within close proximity to Dadaab town, where there are likely refugees residing, however the statistics provided by the UNHCR indicates that "Dadaab" here refers to a camp, not an urban or rural location. It is possible that these figures refer to a population which has not yet been registered or allocated space within one of the three camps.
### TABLE 2: Ugandan refugee population by district


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Refugee Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Refugees</th>
<th>Total District Population</th>
<th>Refugees as percentage of total district population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Nile: Arua</td>
<td>63,393</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>201,493</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Nile: Adjumani</td>
<td>56,373</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>855,055</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Nile: Moyo</td>
<td>33,079</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>199,912</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Nile: Yumbe</td>
<td>9,445</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53,325</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoima</td>
<td>17,842</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>349,204</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyenjojo</td>
<td>7,951</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>380,362</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masindi</td>
<td>14,984</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>469,865</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbarara</td>
<td>19,252</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,089,051</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>221,319</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3,598,267</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3: Water Indicators for Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda 2004-2007

Adapted from: de Bruijn, Bart (2009) “The Living Conditions and Well-being of Refugees” UNDP, Geneva p.28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Daily litres of water available per person</th>
<th>Number of persons per usable water point</th>
<th>Distance to nearest water point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tap 80; Well/hand-pump 200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPHERE</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tap – 250; Well/hand-pump 500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Average water availability (litres)</td>
<td>Percentage of camps meeting UNHCR standard</td>
<td>Average number of persons per water tap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(450)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4: “Wealth group breakdown within Dadaab camps, 1999”**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>% of total pop.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>Large traders, e.g., Posho mill owners. Move around to trade in the northeast or Somalia. Monthly income, over 4,000 Ksh</td>
<td>5-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better-Off Middle</td>
<td>Traders and incentive earners. Households with an incentive worker are calculated to be 6% of the pop. Monthly income: 2,500-4,000 Ksh</td>
<td>10-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Vegetable sellers, clothes sellers, house builders, cereal stores and medium traders. Monthly income: 800-2,500 Ksh</td>
<td>15-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Poor</td>
<td>Firewood collectors, housemaids, men with wheelbarrows. Monthly income: 400 - 800 Ksh</td>
<td>15-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Refugees without any regular income source except gifts, or those who seasonally (or occasionally) collect and sell wood or wild food or ration cereals</td>
<td>35-45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Involving the Refugees and Promote Self-reliance. Methods, and should, for example, avoid regi-

27. In order to ensure that the assistance pro-

28. If the emergency operation involves the refugees in this way from the start, its effectiveness will be greatly enhanced. Furthermore, such an approach will allow the refugees to maintain their sense of dignity and purpose, encourage self-

reliance and help avoid dependency. In emergencies, refugees are often regarded as helpless and passive recipients of external assistance. In the long term this sets a pattern of dependency. Refugees must be encouraged to help themselves by using their own skills and resources from the beginning of an emergency.