SOME ASPECTS OF INTEGRATION OF
SELF-SETTLED REFUGEES IN JUBA, SUDAN

By

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This paper is a summary of a chapter in a research study conducted by Mr Philip Ramaga and myself. The study was contracted for the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees Ministry of Interior, Sudan, by the Bureau for Translation, Research and Legal Consultancy. The title of the research is "Spontaneously-Settled Refugees in Juba: A Socio-Economic Study".

The main source of data for the research was a questionnaire supervised by the two researchers where 225 refugee households representing twelve ethnic groups were interviewed. Personal additional interviews were also conducted. Several other sources of data collected by the researchers for other relevant studies were used.

The phrase 'spontaneously-settled refugees' has been used to refer to those who have settled outside the assisted settlements. However, not all life-styles and strategies used by refugees would allow categorization of refugees into these two types. Some refugees came to Juba immediately after entry into the Sudan. The majority first settled at the border areas or in the assisted settlements. They have homes in such original areas of settlement, i.e. assisted settlements or other self-settled areas where part of the family may be living, while those in the urban areas are mainly engaged in salaried employment.

The research aimed at assessing the social and economic implications of the lives of spontaneously-settled refugees in Juba. It involved an inquiry into the refugee impact on the host society and also the maintenance of the life-style of the refugees as a consequence of these circumstances. In a wider context, attempt was made to identify the relationship between the host community in Juba and rural refugees.

The interrelation between the social structure of a migrant population and its economic activities must involve two levels of socialization: within the migrant population itself, and between the migrants and the host population. This explains the ease or difficulty with which the new
society integrates into the host community. Self-settled refugees live in close contact with the national population. A common assumption is that refugees in settlements integrate easily with the national population of the same ethnic background. However, the design of the settlements tends to consolidate these refugees' national identity rather than their ethnic identity.

People inhabiting the border areas between Uganda and the Sudan share common ethnic backgrounds. The Madi and the Kakwa, for instance, are ethnic groups found in both Uganda and Sudan. This has led to the assumption of easy integration through common ethnicity. It is widely reported that there are fewer than expected Kakwas in the refugee settlements, an opinion that appears to lend credence to this assumption. Several factors may, however, explain why this is mere assumption. The Kakwa are a small ethnic group in Uganda with counterparts in Zaire and the Sudan. Their geographical location in the Sudan renders the Kakwa-occupied area of Uganda the nearest location for their refuge.

The Sudanese Kakwa had easy access to the Kakwa region of Uganda, where many of them integrated into the host community during their refuge. Kaya is the only border town through which a major road from Kakwa-occupied land leads to Uganda. This meant that the communication infrastructure favoured the Sudanese Kakwa in getting to the area occupied by the same ethnic group. Unlike the Kakwas, the Madi on the East Bank of the Nile went through the Juba-Nimule road leading to a region of Uganda occupied by the Acholi, and the Kuku refugees moved through the Kajokeji-Moyo road and thereby entered the area occupied by the Madi of Uganda. Despite the Ugandan Government's policy of planned settlement, some refugees took to self-settled life. Some Kuku remained in Madi area while many self-settled Madi were in Acholi area. The presence of Kuku in southern Uganda is a result of long-term adjustments to the economic conditions after the Government had transferred them from northern Uganda to different parts of
southern Uganda. It is material that the immediate settlement of the Kakwa among their ethnic group accorded the refugees an advantage in integration compared to the other ethnic groups.

With a high rate of integration, many of the refugees participated in jobs and activities in the same way as nationals. It is highly likely that many Kakwas currently known as refugees are Sudanese. This makes it easier for them to acquire land and settle on their own than for the others with whom they have fled. Conversely, a Ugandan national would also find it easy to obtain documentation of nationality after having experienced a high degree of integration with a Sudanese group.

The easy choice between the two identities cannot be said of the Sudanese and Ugandan Madi who had experienced a lower degree of social integration. 'Social integration' here does not refer to commonness of culture and social organization but rather, to an intermingling of groups which requires actual contact. It is true that groups of the same ethnic backgrounds integrate easily, but physical distance also has a direct effect on whether the groups mix.

Other factors that explain the apparently high rate of integration between the Kakwa of the Sudan and Uganda are the range and conditions of economic activity in the West Bank. By virtue of geographical locations too, the Kakwa refugees from Uganda happen to have crossed into the Sudan through Kaya. Self-settlement along the border was not only determined by the immediate unavailability of aid and the relevant administrative facilities, but also, inter alia, the economic incentives at the border of which all settlers were aware. People in the border areas of Uganda, Zaire and Sudan had long been active participants in the triangular border trade. Compared with the Ugandan-Sudanese border on the East Bank, the West Bank area is commercially far more prosperous. Perhaps the triangular nature of the trade as compared to the 'bilateral' one through Nimule is an added
advantage. Although busy commercial travel along Terit-Kapoeta Road indicates the heavy commercial activities involving Kenya, this is mainly official and does not involve the locals as much as does the border trade in Kaya region. In addition, the route to Kenya is off the Nimule route along which the Ugandan refugees reside. The West Bank border region further offers a better climate for both agriculture and commerce because of the relatively fertile lands along the Yei-Kaya road. Agriculture and commerce can therefore become alternatives or complements in family economic strategies.

The influence of geographical location on the movement of the Sudanese Kakwa refugees is not merely analogous to the influence of location on the flight of Ugandan Kakwas, but actually determined by the same factors. This background to the assumption of Kakwa integration needs to be borne in mind in weighing the importance of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds as determinants of social integration.

Additionally, the peculiar position of the assisted settlements needs elaboration, as it has considerable effects on integration. The tendency of a minority group to maintain solidarity within a larger society is natural, based on the need to survive possible xenophobic attitudes from the dominant population. There is reason to believe that refugees not only have such a need but also seek to maintain their identity as nationals of the country of origin. The identification of a refugee by his nationality is intrinsically an aspect of refugee law and policy. Refugees retain their nationalities despite indefinite stay outside their own countries. This identity is reinforced by settlement patterns whereby refugees locate in areas where their national neighbours live. In the course of settlement life, mechanisms for administration and dispute settlement are created.

Conflicts between individuals are taken to the chiefs only when they cannot be solved by the disciplinary committees. Through the disciplinary
committees, the common social norms of Uganda are maintained. In fact, some refugees go to the settlement with the feeling that it provides for them an atmosphere that conforms with the one in Uganda.

National identity has a generally negative effect on social integration with the hosts. There is, for instance, little initiative among the inhabitants of planned settlements to learn Arabic. Refugees speak their own languages and some Kishwahili, while most of the educated people of different mother tongues speak English. This lack of motivation is reflected in the common tendency among their Sudanese neighbours to speak the Kishwahili which most of them learnt during their refuge in Uganda. This cannot be said of the urban refugees, a very large majority of whom speak Arabic. The self-settled refugees in commercial centres have a similar inclination to learn Arabic. This enables them to carry out their productive activities easily and helps in general socialization.

It is believed that the majority of the refugees are in planned settlements. This suggests that the negative effect of the planned settlement on social integration likely outweighs the positive, integrative impact of common language or origin. These latter factors operate only during contact. Consequently, the looser the contact, the lesser the impact. It would be a situation similar to that of physical barriers that create the difference between integratable societies without contact and integratable societies in contact. The influence of language and ethnicity cannot be denied, but national identity in rural areas is more important than common ethnic identity.

Common culture may support the assumption of easy integration between members of the same ethnic group; but culture is built out of human response to the environment, and therefore changes when the environment does. Thus, an important characteristic of culture is its dynamism. Whereas the ethnic classifications in Africa are based on long-established
homogeneity, especially of language, socio-economic changes transform or even supplant common cultures. In this way, traditional beliefs have been heavily undermined by modern religions. The rise of both a monetary economy and Government control of resources has weakened the traditional economic system, thereby transforming the cultural norms relating to productive activities. Activities like organized hunting have been affected by Government control over game, leaving a few well-to-do inhabitants to hunt big game after obtaining necessary permits from the relevant authorities. Different cultures, symbols of human development, therefore merge as different peoples are subjected to the same Government ideology and socio-economic conditions. Whereas language retains some value as a means for communication between members of the same ethnic group, other aspects of culture are very vulnerable to external urban influences. Even the institution of marriage, which usually endures longer than other cultural spheres, undergoes changes through altered social expectations about both the values of marriage and the punitive measures against pre-marital and extra-marital affairs.

In the relationships between rural and urban refugees and their neighbours, we notice the complexity of relations in which the importance of ethnic language and ethnicity change.

The Madi and Kakwa languages spoken in the East Bank become less significant as the refugee, or even the national, moves from the rural to the urban area where Arabic is the lingua franca. Similarly, the significance of ethnicity is reduced as the refugee enters an urban area with its multiplicity of ethnic groups and languages. The rural migrant moving to an urban area always expects to move into a heterogeneous population. Therefore, even if the assumption of easy integration were true, it would not be as significant to the urban refugee as to the rural refugee. While traditional rural life would require a considerable effort on the part of a stranger to live up to the expectations of the indigenous
society, urban conditions give rise to common yardsticks for measuring the propriety of behaviours of all urban dwellers regardless of their ethnic, geographical and religious affiliations.

One question is whether, given the mixture of societies, urbanism is a myth or a different social system. The varying backgrounds of the actors in the urban society tend to suggest that urban society cannot be understood in the same way as its component ethnic groups can in the rural setting. It is a society of people attracted by urban opportunities for economic and social improvement. Life is more individualistic and competitive, even though a monetary economy which transcends every productive activity gives the impression of common means of livelihood. The urban community is therefore a product of the spatial relationship between the actors and their activities. Its fundamental characteristic is the concentration of heterogeneous people in an identified area, the town. Another characteristic of urban society is the adaptation of convenient means of production, especially in the choice of technology.

In business which involves a lot of mobility, for instance, the high level of competition demands the use of more advanced means like the automobile instead of foot or bicycles. There is also greater tendency to use capital-intensive methods of production, unlike the rural reliance on labour-intensive methods. Juba is, however, a town that does not possess the characteristics of the industrialized capitalist cities from which most sociological writing on urbanism has originated. It cannot be called an industrial town, but it is the biggest centre of Government and business activities in the Equatoria Region, attracting people to an area where money is the cardinal instrument of livelihood and social relations. The competitive relationships between individuals are therefore mainly means to achieve economic goals. In the rural areas, by contrast, closely-knit family and clan units indicate a relatively high social solidarity.
The refugee population in Juba is scattered. Although there are some areas of ethnic concentration, this does not mean that most refugees in those ethnic groups live in these areas. Whereas there is a concentration of the Madi in Tengping area, other Madis in different parts of the town constitute the majority. Our data indicate that out of the fifty Madi households in the sample, only twenty were in Tengping.

Availability of land and the state of urban housing have determined the residential locations of refugees and other urban dwellers who have the land titles in Juba. Government housing facilities are inadequate. Apart from the housing for Government dignitaries and middle rank civil servants, there is a housing estate in Munuki that only persons with incomes in the region of £s. 200-300 per month can afford. An overwhelming majority of people rent thatched houses on a monthly basis.

From the population mixture in the residential areas and the cramped households in Juba, one can see how the inadequacy of Government housing facilities has encouraged landowners to build as many tukuls as possible for their own profit. This could be seen from the different motivations we could see in the data we collected and from the timing of refugee movement to Juba. The refugees could not have moved to Juba at the same time. Juba has had its current residential structures for long. Refugees of an ethnic group could not therefore have a location that could be identified as their residence since it needed time for persons of the same ethnic group to gravitate towards one residential area when they do not enter the town together. It is not only a question of time but also of space: physical proximity has a bearing on the solidarity within refugee society. But given the unavailability of urban land for the settlement of a community of people where they would have been able to undertake certain economic activities, many refugees, even after knowing each other, keep in their rented residences. An area like Tengping became a centre of attraction when a population which had settled there earlier moved away, leaving
behind an area for social and economic activity. Especially significant was the land, which was the most important item for residence and agricultural activities. Only then could a group be identified by its residence. Therefore, the ethnic factor is not as significant in an urban area as it is in the rural area, not even between the refugees and the indigenous population, since people of the same ethnic backgrounds have the tendency to adopt individualistic urban life despite common ethnic identity. The nationals of the same ethnic background are also located all over the town, a situation produced by urban residential patterns.

The study of urbanism modified the orthodox interpretation of ethnicity. Here the term 'ethnicity' has a wider scope. In an attempt to define ethnicity broadly Cohen said in his book Urban Ethnicity:

Ethnicity is a ubiquitous phenomenon in both developing and developed countries, past and present. In the third world the tribes, villages, bands, and isolated communities which have until recently been our traditional subject-matter, are everywhere today becoming integral parts of new state structures and are thus being transformed into ethnic groupings with varying degrees of distinctiveness (1974:ix).

He concluded that '... the phenomena of ethnicity are so dramatically evident in the cities, in both developing and developed countries...' (1974:ix). Because of a city's peculiar characteristics, it had to be studied within the context of the national state in order to make sense economically, politically, demographically and culturally. He thus saw its peculiar characteristics as evidence of ethnicity, which to him refers to the degree of conformity by members of a collectivity of people to common patterns of normative behaviour in the course of social interaction.

Following this interpretation, a consideration of urban life in Juba reveals a great deal about the inappropriateness of the traditional meaning
of ethnicity. In urban conditions, relationships develop that cannot be traced to the norms of any given ethnic group, hence, the use of the phrase 'urban ethnicity'. Monetary economic relations are a common feature of the urban individual relations. Because monetary bias tends to stratify urban society in terms of material status, the educational and business positions of many urban refugees tend to militate against the segmentation of the urban society into refugees and nationals. Further, because individual refugees are engaged in different kinds of activities, there is little possibility of informally categorizing them as one social group.

As the majority of urban dwellers are professionals or businessmen, there is little initiative to organize themselves for productive activities like the clan or even the settlement refugees attempt to do in the rural area. This is true of both the urban refugees and nationals. For instance, distribution of scarce commodities is mainly done by consumer co-operatives operating within the ambit of both Government departments and non-governmental agencies in which both refugees and nationals may be employed. Similarly, among businessmen the competition for profits and the rules of trade maintain or consolidate trading norms. Fishmongers, shoemakers, produce sellers, and other traders maintain close business relations which even result in friendships for some. These relations can be inferred from the co-ordination of adjustment in prices during fluctuations in supply and demand, although urban authorities always attempt to regulate the conduct of businesses. Urban life therefore cuts across traditional ethnicity and eases the development of common ways of life among urban dwellers.

An important aspect of urban ethnicity is Government influence on the formulation of ideologies governing social relations. As Government wields the power to enforce a wide variety of regulations, a fairly uniform response is expected from urban dwellers in such matters as housing, hygiene, business, and the enjoyment of benefits from public utilities.
Urban planning, for example, affects the manner in which persons of the same ethnic backgrounds would have wanted to settle. Such plans in Juba involve both the grading of residential and business areas, and the specification of housing standards in the respective areas.

This confirms the urban segmentation on material grounds. With frequent anxieties over food and other supplies in town, Government is prone to exercise considerable authority over the distribution of food. Due to the large population and the possibility of raising reasonable public revenue from water, beneficiaries of water resources like taps and boreholes are requested to pay for the service. These are situations that rarely exist in the rural areas.

The main differences between urban and rural societies are the nature of economic activity and the level of communal life. Social solidarity in the rural area suggests that the degree of social integration depends on clan, ethnic and linguistic factors. In urban areas these factors are not as significant as the material well-being of the urban dwellers. The important factors in the rural areas merely supplant the peculiar factors in the town. It may therefore be concluded that although the Ugandan refugees in Juba do not live with their own ethnic groups, they are integrated with the nationals in the sense that they generally experience common social and economic conditions.
NOTES

1. According to UNHCR, as of January 1985 there were 195,000 Ugandan refugees in southern Sudan, 160,000 of whom were being assisted with transit, reception and settlement. (Source: UNHCR fact sheet, January 1985.) The report on UNHCR assistance activities in 1984-85 showed that there were 200,000 Ugandan refugees, 130,000 of whom were being assisted in settlements. (See Report on UNHCR assistance activities and proposed voluntary funds programmes and budget for 1986, UNHCR, 1986.)

2. Tengping is a residential area near Juba Airport.

3. 'Ethnic' is here used in the traditional sense of the word distinct from urban 'ethnicity'.

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