

Preface

The purpose of this report is to bring awareness to the problems that refugees are facing. This report will include why they are leaving, or are trying to leave their country; what are the problems that they face after they have left their homes when trying to seek asylum in other places; and what resistance they face when trying to return home.

Before one looks at what problems a refugee must face, they must know what a refugee is. The literal definition for refugee is “One who flees in search of refuge, as in times of war, political oppression, or religious persecution.”(www.dictionary.com) The United Nations High Council for Refugee has expanded on this definition for political and humanitarian reasons. They arrived at the concessions that a refugee is “a person owing to the well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” However this does not include those people who are not lucky enough to be able to seek asylum out side their own county, and for the purposes of this report, displaced people who could not find refuge out side their own country will also be accounted as refugees.

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Summary

This report contains facts and figures, compiled by different organizations, which are involved in refugee operations. This report will discuss the background of the issue; who is in control of power, Sadako Ogata's role within the issue, three case studies and possible solutions to the problem. The case studies will not be the immediate problems that refugees face, but the overall problems that they face. Such as why they are leaving, where can they go, and whether it is possible to return.

The information for this report was gathered from, internet websites. These websites contain, books, interviews, and news bulletins. Some of the main websites used were United States Committee for Refugees (www.refugees.org), and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (<http://unhcr.ch>), but there was also many other websites used as well.

Background

The issue of refugees, whether they are being internally displaced or internationally displaced, has been around for centuries. There have been refugees for as far back as tens of thousands of years, all the way up to present. One of the older examples was in France in 1572, The St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. The French Protestants were killed on the order of the French royal family. Many of the Protestants

fled to neighboring countries, to escape persecution. (Warner, 10) Even though this is an old problem, it is not a problem that is going away.

The problem of displaced people has been around for a long time to. It is hard to find exact statistics, and facts, because they are harder to track. The reason that people stay in the country instead of leaving changes and is not the same for a large group of people. It maybe for many reasons such as, they do not have enough money to travel, do know where to go, or they do not have any relatives or family to stay with outside. The numbers with internally displaced people are very hard to pin down.

(<http://www.icrc.org>) The problem is also complicated because all displaced people do not travel in the same direction. (Appendix I) They should be approached with extreme caution, because they are not always one hundred percent accurate. The reason that these numbers are so difficult to pin down, is simply because they do not have to go over any borders, so there is not record of their movement. In most cases since internally displaced people's cases, they are still near the conflict zone so they are very difficult to reach for humanitarian aid. (<http://www.icrc.org>)

In 1991 there was somewhere between two and three million refugees. Today there are estimated to be more then twenty-three million refugees and displaced people. (<http://fullbrightalumni.org>) This is problem is not getting smaller and is not getting any easier to deal with.

People in many different villages, towns, cities, and countries are being forced from their homes. The reasons and conditions, under which refugees are leaving, differ but the underlying reason is the same. They are being forced to leave because their rights to: life, not be tortured, not be held in slavery or servitude, right to liberty and not to

arbitrarily detained, and security of persons, are being ignored. (<http://www.hrw.org>)

Their human rights are being blatantly ignored.

Many first nations are huge financial supporters of the cause, few of these countries, are accepting refugees to the extent which third world countries are. The extent to which these poorer countries are hosting refugees and supporting them, are far greater than the involvement of first world countries. “Over 80 percent of the worlds refugees have been taken in by the poorest nations . . . Only 5 percent of world’s refugees live in rich European countries.” (Warner, 10) (Appendix II) These are not the only statistics that are scary. (Appendix III) Somewhere around 10 million (almost half) of the world’s refugees are children and young people. There are over 5 million refugees in Africa, and there would be millions more if you included displaced people. (Warner, 10)

Power

In the case of refugees, no individual person or organization has absolute power over the refugees. In every situation it varies and changes. Overall the person or people that have power are usually responsible for the displacement of the refugees. The only one constant stance of power, or lack of power, is the refugees. The refugees in every case are the powerless, and that is why they end up having to leave their homes. The refugees have little to no power, and it is virtually impossible for them to help themselves based on the circumstances, which they live in.

In order for refugees to be able to help themselves they need help in getting started, and that is why first worlds need to care. There are a number of organizations set up to help refugees and displaced people. These organizations vary, from religious, non-

religious, governmental, nongovernmental, national, or internationally based groups. Some of the better-known organizations include, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, World Food Program, World Vision, and the Catholic Church, but there are numerous other ones. There are also a lot of countries that contribute to stopping the problem of refugees.

The U.S. gave over 392.5 million dollars last year, and many other countries gave millions to the UNHCR. Even though many nations are giving millions of dollars the UNHCR is still falling short of its budget. In 1992 its income was \$1 billion dollars, which was still \$100 million short of its operating cost. (Warner, 11) This year was not the first and was not the last year it has come up short. The UNHCR has yet to come in over budget, in the area of refugees there is always more that can be done. These problems have caused a huge ripple of effects in the lives of refugees. “Some 40,000 refugees from Chad and Nigeria received little or no assistance because budget constraints caused UNHCR to close its office in Cameroon. Budget cuts curtailed maintenance and purchase of trucks and boats needed to deliver humanitarian supplies to 90,000 refugees from Angola and Congo-Kinshasa.” (<http://www.refugees.org>) These two examples are just a small part of the bigger picture. Even though many First World countries do not want to pay anymore because, they do not see it as their problem, it is. Even though it is not happening in their country, it is happening in their world.

Creative Thinker

Sadako Ogata

Sadako Ogata is one of, if not the most influential activist for refugees. She is currently the High Commissioner of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. In her current position she has the ability to advise the U.N. on the problems for refugees and recommend action what course of action to take. (<http://www.fullbrightsalumni.org>)

She was first voted into the position of United Nations High Commissioner for refugees in 1993. She has been reelected, after every 4-year term, three times. She is still currently holding the position. (<http://www.fullbrightsalumni.org>) She became compelled to this because she felt a responsibility to the refugees “These were people who faced death and threats from people who used to live not only in the same country, area, or community, but even neighbourhood.” (<http://www.fullbrightsalumni.org>)

Sadako Ogata has been a huge influence in the issue of refugees. She is an expert in her field, and has taken part in many different projects, and efforts of the UNHCR. She was part of the group that spear headed the project “Imagine Coexistence”. This project was based on the idea of creating projects that would bring people out of necessity to work together. This initiative ended up doing many projects, in places such as Bosnia, Rwanda, and many other countries. (<http://www.fullbrightsalumni.org>)

“Excluding certain groups of people, or neglecting measures to help the weak, are sure ways to sow the seeds of division and conflict which eventually erode societies from within.” (<http://www.fullbrightsalumni.org>)

Case Studies

Colombia

Colombia is a good example of the beginning of the road for refugees. That does not mean that it is a new problem in Colombia, but it does illustrate the first step that all refugees experience in the process of becoming a refugee. This case study was chosen to show the problems that are forcing refugees from their own homes. In this particular case study the underlying reason is, internal conflict between paramilitary and revolutionary groups. In others cases it maybe the same or vary between, religious, racist prejudice, political views, or civil war.

Colombia has been in a state of internal conflict for more than 50 years. People have been fleeing the country, because of internal conflict between different military, paramilitary and guerilla fighting. Many villagers have lost their land, homes, and farms, because of fighting. Somewhere between 80,000 and 105,000 Colombian refugees are living in neighboring countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador and other nearby countries. (<http://www.refugees.org>) But these numbers are, just the tip of the ice burg.

Do not forget that since the general term refugee refers to persons that have left the country, this does not include people that have not been able to leave the country, or people who moved across the country. “According to government figures, Colombia saw the second largest increase in internal displacement of concern to UNHCR in 2001.”(<http://www.europaworld.org>) Over 2.45 million were internally displaced from their home in the year 2001. Of the 2.45 million people who have been displaced in Colombia, 342,000 were displaced during the year 2001. (<http://www.refugees.org>) The fighting within the country is over different things depending which group you are in, but the “Colombia’s Ministry of Defense reported that paramilitaries are directly responsible

for 50% of forced displacement, while conflict between paramilitaries and guerillas has lead to 22 percent of forced displacement.” (<http://www.refugees.org>)

Even after these refugees have left their homes they still face a great deal of problems. Most live in poor conditions, less then half of these refugees are employed and only a few have access to health care. (<http://www.refugees.org>)

Background

The largest conflict is between paramilitaries and guerilla fighters. This conflict has been going of for close to half a century. Both groups have been causing more harm then good for their country. Whether fighting each other or, trying to grow their operation, both sides, in the end only end up hurting the people more then each other.

One of the largest armed forces in Colombia is known as FARC, which when translated to English means Colombia’s Armed Revolutionary Force. The Communist Party of Colombia first created FARC in 1964. (<http://library.nps.navy.mil>)

While their origins come from the Communist Party, they have drifted from their roots and become a revolutionary force. The government conceded to giving FARC a 42,000 sq. kilometer safe haven, in a deal which brought FARC to the table for peace talks. In the end FARC has created much more problems then solutions, they have used their safe haven to build up their military force, export drugs, and import weapons.

(<http://news.bbc.co.uk>)

The next major military power house is the AUC (“Autodefensas” Unidas de Colombia- United “Self-Defense” Groups of Colombia. This is a larger umbrella organization, which covers most paramilitary groups. (<http://www.refugees.org>) The

paramilitary groups were brought together by the common goal of protecting their own economic interest and opposing FARC from rising to power.

Reasons For Displacement

In the middle of the conflict are everyday people, normal, everyday, people. The main factors for people leaving are the conflict, and the fall out effects of the conflict, such as poverty, and poor government intervention. (<http://www.refugees.org>) Both sides have used methods that have hurt the people badly

Since the 1980's FARC has become involved in narcotics trafficking, which opened the door to many other crimes.

“ Bombings, murder, mortar attacks, kidnapping, extortion, hijacking, as well as guerrilla and conventional military action against Colombian political, military, and economic targets. In March 1999, the FARC executed three US Indian rights activists on Venezuelan territory after it kidnapped them in Colombia. Foreign citizens often are targets of FARC kidnapping for ransom.” (<http://library.nps.navy.mil>)

FARC is a very large presence in its areas of power. They commonly kill and threaten local officials, civic leaders, and business owners who are believed to be opposing them. They use tactics of intimidation tactics to get the support of the local civilians support, in the end this ends up alienating them. FARC uses crime including kidnapping and taxing wealthy individuals, businesses and coca growers and narco-traffickers in areas of its power. (<http://www.refugees.org>)

The AUC was only created in 1997 to consolidate the paramilitary groups (<http://library.nps.navy.mil>), but these military groups have been around for close to half

a century. They have been responsible for killings and forced displacements of civilians in Colombia. Their goal is to rid Colombia of the guerrillas, but they have also side tracked into drug trafficking, expanding their rural properties by expelling landowners with appropriating their lands. Has been described as “mercenary vigilante force, financed by criminal activities.”(Colombian Commission of Jurists) there is “active or passive participation of government forces” More then 6,000 of the 33,000 of these paramilitary groups are estimated to be children, as young as 10 years old.

(<http://www.refugees.org>)

Current Action

The Colombian government is trying to end the internal conflict. Laws have been made to try to outline responsibility to the displaced, but they have been very poorly implemented. Since 1999 the government’s position had improved, its post emergency response needs to be improved. (<http://www.refugees.org>) The Colombian government is also receiving assistance from outside sources. Over 80% of assistance that displaced people receive comes from U.N. agencies.

Colombia receives assistance from many different government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Some of the larger organizations include: the Catholic Church, World Food Program, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). There organizations provide emergency assistance for newly displaced person, as well as food aid.

(<http://www.refugees.org>)

The largest action is being taking against the drug trafficking problem, which is the larger problem that is behind most internal conflicts. “Plan Colombia” is an American two-year plan, to give Colombia financial aid. The plan has an overall grand total of \$1.3 billion dollars included in the aid package. The largest chunks are going to the military (\$519 million) and police (\$123.8 million) to help fight the narcotics trafficking problem. The plan also includes initiatives such as: encouraging farmers to grow crops other than coca and assistance to displaced persons, child soldiers, and human rights and democratization projects. (<http://www.refugees.org>)

Turkey

Turkey is the next step in the process that most refugees go through. This case study was chosen because Turkey is a country which problems that many refugees go through when trying to seek asylum and problems trying to repatriate.

Turkey does have people being displaced with-in the country, and there are a few people fleeing Turkey to seek asylum elsewhere. Exact figures are hard to pin down, because the government does not count anyone as displaced unless they are forced by evacuation. The government reports that there are no internally displaced people in Turkey, but they have reported that 378,000 people have ‘migrated’ from 3,165 villages. Nongovernmental organizations estimate the number as high as three million people. The U.S. (in 2001) said that a ‘credible estimate’ was around 1 million people.

(<http://www.refugees.org>)

The problems that Turkey is facing have to do with geographic location and political tensions. The first problem, geographic location, Turkey is a part of Europe and

only that they only have a responsibility to host non-European refugees. The second is internal, people trying to return home have been having problems and their return has been restricted to certain parts.

Background

Internally, there has been somewhere between 400,000 and 1,000,000 citizens displaced in Turkey. From that number, the majority of the displaced people in Turkey have been Kurdish people. The reason for this is because the internal conflict is between the Turkish military and security forces against the Kurdish Workers Party, in the southeast part of Turkey.

Although there are people being displaced inside Turkey they are not the only people that are refugees inside Turkey. Since Turkey is located just above the Middle East it has had to play host refugee from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Macedonia, and other Middle Eastern countries.

Seeking Asylum

Turkey has very stringent rules about seeking asylum there. One of the first requirements is that within the first five days that you are there you must report to the authorities and begin the application process. If you do not meet this first requirement you may be immediately sent home without any consideration of their request for asylum, this may also happen if a refugee enters the country illegally. (<http://web.amnesty.org>) For a refugee, reporting their presence is just the beginning of the application process.

This process is even harder for non-European refugees, which most of the refugees coming to Turkey are not.

“ Although Turkey has ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) and its 1967 Protocol, it operates the Refugee Convention with a geographical restriction, applying the terms of the Convention only to refugees from Europe” (<http://web.amnesty.org>) This basically means that it only recognizes refugees from Europe, any refugees coming from outside Europe, are not permitted to settle. If after going through the proper procedures, are recognized they are labeled as an ‘asylum-seeker’. If the Turkish government does recognize a non European refugee claims as ‘valid for protection’ and they receive the status of asylum seeker then their case is transferred to UNHCR for resettlement in a third party country.

(<http://web.amnesty.org>)

Coming Back

People presume that returning home would be easy for refugees. For citizens of Turkey, coming home seems like an even bigger problem than leaving. In many cases they are put through many hardship and forced to live through the reasons for which they left their homes before. For other refugees they are not even allowed to go back. In many cases the government takes advantage of the position that they are in.

Since most of the displaced people come from the southeast, they can limit the conditions under which they can return. In some cases the government has given them a “loyalty test.” They do this by forcing males to join the Village Guard. In many cause

the Village Guard was part of the conflict in these refugee's homes, and part of the reason why they left in the first place. (<http://www.refugees.org>)

In other cases the government has completely stopped the returnees from being allowed to return home. They have blocked off their town, for reasons of "security". In the past year there has been little to no fighting at all, but a large number of towns are still classified as in a state of emergency. This is a huge set back for returnees because it prevents them from starting on the path back to their normal life.

(<http://www.refugees.org>)

These roadblocks that the government is setting up for returnees, are just the start of their problems. Once they return, they still have to deal with issues of rebuilding their home, and their communities. While the UNHCR does provide some assistance they have only been able to help the most vulnerable cases, in 2001 that number was less than 100. So many of the returnees live in impoverish conditions, and remain that way until they receive outside assistance. (<http://www.unhcr.ch>)

Rwanda

Rwanda, the third and final case study, was chosen because it is a good example of how a country can change. It is changing from a country in which many people were displaced for years, to a country that's refugees are slowly coming back, and Rwanda is also taking in refugees from other countries. (<http://www.refugees.org>)

Rwanda is slowly emerging from a very long era of fighting between the Hutu and the Tutsi people. There have been genocides launched by both sides, and many other violent encounters with both sides. Now that some of the power has begun to balance out, there

have been a lot more real, attempts at peace. Most of the refugees from Rwanda fled to places such as Congo-Kinshasa. In 2001, only 2,000 Rwandans went to Congo-Kinshasa under refugee status. In the same year over 20,000 refugees repatriated.

(<http://www.refugees.org>)

Background

The clash of cultures in Rwanda has been between the Hutus and Tutsis. They have been in conflict for the better part of the 19th century. They have been struggling for political power in the country. The tension from these two ethnic groups has resulted in problems from discrimination to massacres and genocide. (<http://www.crimesofwar.org>)

In the 1950's and 1960's hundreds of thousands of Tutsi people left the country. They remained refugees for more than 30 years. In 1990's there was a civil war. It was between the Hutu dominated government and the Tutsi rebels. There was a short-lived peace agreement in 1993 but that did not last for long. Hutu extremist launched genocide in 1994 against the Tutsi population. Somewhere between half a million and a million people were massacred. Tutsi rebels defeated the government's Hutu dominated government, later the same year. This defeat scared many Hutus that thought the Tutsi would seek revenge, and approximately 1 million Hutus fled the country in 1994.

(<http://www.refugees.org>)

Since these conflicts in the early 1990's literally millions of refugees have come back. From the number of Hutus that left in 1994 (1 million), 50, 000 have yet to return. "25 million (One-third of Rwanda's Population) former refugees (both Hutu and Tutsi) have come back and attempted to reintegrate since 1994. (<http://www.refugees.org>)

What is Getting Better?

Since 1996 there has been a change in the atmosphere in Rwanda. It was started with a shift to Tutsi government and since then there has, surprisingly, been large-scale repatriation by Hutu refugees. Even though the government is now, Tutsi dominated, the Hutu refugees have still been encouraged to repatriate. From 1999-2001 about 80,000 have returned. In many cases these returnees have been able to reclaim their land, and those that have not are given new land to settle by the government.

(<http://www.refugees.org>)

Since most refugees left with very little, when they come back they receive aid packages. These packages include three-month supply of food, plastic sheeting, blankets, sleeping mats, soap, cooking utensils, and transportation to their homes. All these are very helpful for returnees, because most will not have a job, or anywhere to farm their own food, for a while. So this assistance helps them survive for the first few months.

(<http://www.refugees.org>)

Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa, with the return of more than a million people, land issues are very prevalent. The Rwanda governments plan to combat the problem by “Villagization”. The Villagization plan put the estimated number of houses that needed to be built at around 400,000. This housing would be for refugees and the genocide survivors, both Hutu and Tutsi. The government is literally building new villages. (<http://www.africaaction.org>)

What Needs Work

Even though there have been very large amounts of returnees, this does not mean that all of the social tensions are gone. The conflict between the two ethnic groups did happen and there were very many horrible and atrocious crimes committed. To date there are still many tensions and there has been a lot of racial discrimination. Both sides feel that they were the victims and they still bare the resentment against the other.

(<http://www.africaaction.org>)

A huge problem comes with the rebuilding of homes in the villagization project. Since many of these homes are being in brand new communities, the governments planning for basic need such as, water, latrines, education, and medical care were poorly planned. (<http://refugees.org>) The opposition to the government calls the plan ambitious, poorly planned, and argue that it will end up causing forced relocation, and end up adding to the social tensions which are already greatly strained. (<http://www.africaaction.org>)

The problems in Rwanda are mainly linked to social tensions, and the pains, which the decades of fighting caused. With over 8 million people there is bound to be some people who will not let it go. There are many problems such as uprisings, hate propaganda, and there are many vulnerable returnees who are very helpless against such actions.” (<http://africaaction.org>) These people are in great need of support, and they make the need for outside intervention even more or a need.

Conclusion

Solutions

There is no absolute solution that is possible for every refugee situation. For the problems of refugees, each case needs to be identified. The issues of why they are leaving, what problems they face, and what problems when resettling, all need to be addressed. In the case of Colombia, it is drug related so, many there have been stringent efforts to help combat against the drug trade. (<http://refugee.org>) If organizations tried to combat drug trade in other places where it is unrelated to the refugee crisis, it is unlikely that unlikely that it would help the situation.

The organization out there such as the UNHCR, Amnesty, and others are all helping with refugee's emergency problems. Their job is to deal with the refugees immediate threats, such as hunger, medical care, and protection from violence. Their job does not involve large-scale political movements. It is how ever their job to make recommendations, and raise concerns to organizations such as the U.N. who in turn can take political action, to begin making progress in the reasons for displacement. In an address to the U.N. Security council Mr. Volodymyr Yelchenko, the permanent representative for Ukraine, said this, "The Security Council should take a serious look at the proposal with regard to an expanded concept of peacekeeping, as she (Sadako Ogata) put it, addressing in particular the problem of cross-border flows of refugees."

(<http://www.uamission.org>)

The need for international burden sharing has been around for a long time. The problem was laid down in the Geneva Convention in 1951 and has been in many important pieces of refugee policy and documents that go through the U.N. If there is to be any further progress, there is a need for international solidarity, and equal sharing of the cost. The main vehicle for the burden sharing is the UNHCR, but there has been a very definite lack of participation from many countries. So if more first world countries, step up on issues such as hosting, and in donating to the cause, there is very large potential for major successes in the world's refugee crisis. (<http://www.nrc.no>)

Canada's Role

Canada has for a long time been part of the possible solution. There is no internal conflict, which is causing people to leave Canada. Other than those the Native Americans, every other ethnicity and background was originally a refugee to this country, which gives us a greater responsibility to the refugees of today because we to were once in their shoes. (www.refugee.org)

Canada in the past has played very large roles in peace keeping in the past. There have been many Canadian lead peace keeping missions, and negotiations mediated by Canadians. Canada's effort to secure peace has been very story for more then 50 years. Examples of this can be seen in Nobel Prize winner Lester B. Persons, efforts in the Suez Crisis in 1956. A Canadian (Andrew Robinson) is currently head of United Nations Refugee Working Group. The UNRWG is actively involved in improving the living standards of refugees and displaced persons; easing and aid reunifications of families; and supporting the process of achieving a viable and comprehensive solution to the

refugee crisis. If Canada keeps up with its past track record then there is huge potential for Canada to be part of the solution to the refugee crisis. (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>)

Future Hopes

In the future, my hopes whether unrealistic or not, is that eventually people will be able to respect each other's differences, and treat one another equally. If we can do this then there is a possibility for peaceful coexistences. A world with peace maybe a very difficult and next to impossible goal to achieve but it is one that needs to be strived towards! I think it is possible and if it has to be done one person at a time, than so be it. It was best put by Sadako Otaga when she said, "Cultivating understanding, not only across nations but also within nations, provides a sure answer to peace and stability. Cultivating understanding is promoting respect and solidarity among different peoples and communities." (<http://www.fulbrightalumni.org>)

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