



UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

AUG 24 1981

UN/SA COLLECTION



Distr.

GENERAL

A/AG.96/595

4 August 1981

Original: English

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Thirty-second session

Report on the Resettlement of Refugees

(Submitted by the High Commissioner)

I. Introduction

1. During 1980 and the first half of 1981, the Office was called upon to promote the resettlement of groups of refugees in various parts of the world where other durable solutions were not available. While efforts were made and programmes implemented for the voluntary repatriation or local settlement of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons wherever feasible, resettlement activities continued to be pursued for small groups of refugees in Africa, Latin America and Europe while a sustained effort continued to be required for a substantial number of displaced persons from the Indo-Chinese peninsula.

2. Special groups of refugees of various origins required particular attention. Such was the case of persons who found themselves in immediate danger of deportation and where resettlement opportunities had to be found in a matter of days. Several receiving countries have been particularly helpful in this regard. Such was also the case of handicapped refugees, whether suffering from physical or mental disabilities, or social dislocation. Many of these persons had or have been in camps or camp-like situations for extended periods of time. The situation of handicapped refugees has become all the more relevant in 1981, designated by the United Nations as the International Year of the Disabled.

3. The following paragraphs describe the principal developments in each of the regions concerned, highlighting in particular the needs of special groups of refugees whenever necessary.

II. Review of OperationsA. Africa

4. Events in the Horn of Africa, as well as continued uncertainty elsewhere on the continent, have caused significant numbers of refugees, many of them of urban origin, to seek assistance in such major cities as Cairo, Djibouti, Khartoum and Nairobi.

Local facilities were, in most cases, ill equipped to accommodate them, and economic conditions such that employment in the country of asylum could not be located; temporary assistance was therefore made available until more durable solutions could be found. These solutions included seeking educational placement opportunities in other countries in Africa, and, when no other solution was possible, in seeking permanent resettlement either within the African continent or outside.

5. As in previous years, close co-ordination was maintained with the Organization of African Unity's Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees (BPEAR). Following up on the Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa held in 1979 at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, regular consultations were held between BPEAR and UNHCR, both in Geneva and in Addis Ababa, to discuss the best manner in which recommendations arising from the Conference could be implemented. With a view to promoting the principle of "burden sharing", a senior-level delegation of the OAU Commission of Fifteen undertook missions to selected African countries to discuss resettlement and educational needs.

6. Several major resettlement countries made significant efforts to process urban refugees in Africa and admit them for permanent resettlement. This permitted several hundred refugees to be resettled in various countries in North America, Europe and the Middle East and to embark upon new lives. Larger numbers of refugees made their own way to Europe and the Middle East to seek employment or asylum elsewhere. To this effect, a UNHCR employment consultant was engaged to identify and secure employment possibilities for refugees in the Middle East in consultation with leading government and business officials in that area.

B. Asia

7. The main preoccupation in the field of resettlement continued to be refugees and displaced persons from the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Following the meeting convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 and 21 July 1979, a total of some 460,000 refugees were resettled in 30 countries between August 1979 and 30 June 1981. Despite this high rate of departures, a sizeable number still wait in camps in various countries of asylum, while Indo-Chinese continue to arrive.

8. On 31 July 1979 the caseload of Vietnamese boat people stood at 198,500. As of 30 June 1981 the caseload had been reduced to 63,310. Following a significant drop from July 1979 onwards, arrivals averaged some 6,320 per month in 1980, increasing somewhat to 8,870 during the first six months of 1981. During the same period, departures from first asylum countries (including departures to but not from Refugee Processing Centres) averaged 12,900 in 1980, dropping to 7,311 in 1981. The difference between the number of persons arriving in the region and those departing for resettlement has resulted in a slight increase in the total caseload from the end of 1980.

9. The High Commissioner continued to attach great importance to the resettlement of Vietnamese "boat people" in the absence of other foreseeable durable solutions. With the largest number of cases located in Hong Kong (16,685), Malaysia (15,644) and Thailand (13,281) with smaller numbers in China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Macau, the Philippines and Singapore, it is hoped that the recent trend towards an increase in the total caseload can soon be reversed.

10. At the time of the July 1979 meeting, the number of land cases in Thailand, excluding those who subsequently arrived from Kampuchea, stood at 175,227. By 30 June 1981 the caseload had been reduced to 105,906. While the rate of departures averaged 7,560 per month in 1980, dropping to 3,570 in 1981, the reduction in the total caseload was also influenced by a steady decline in the number of arrivals. Most of these land cases are of Lao origin, with smaller numbers of Khmer and Vietnamese who arrived in Thailand by land.
11. In the face of reports that a large majority of land cases in Thailand either do not wish to be resettled or are undecided, UNHCR field staff carried out a comprehensive survey of land camps to determine the aspirations of the various groups of refugees, some of whom have been in camps for five years or more. The results of this survey are being shared with interested Governments in the hope that countries of resettlement will devote sufficient attention to these diverse groups.
12. Governments will recall the large-scale influx into Thailand and the border areas in 1979 of several hundred thousand Kampucheans, some 150,000 of whom were accommodated in UNHCR holding centres. The situation of Kampucheans continues to receive a good deal of attention. While every effort is being made to find alternative durable solutions for some 92,000 persons remaining in UNHCR holding centres, 57,457 Kampucheans have been moved out of the centres for resettlement processing. Of this number 32,265 have departed for 15 countries. Taking into account all relevant circumstances, it is the High Commissioner's hope that in the coming months priority will be given to the movement of 25,000 Kampucheans currently in processing centres in Thailand to permit the resettlement of further Kampucheans in various UNHCR holding centres who may qualify under existing resettlement programmes.
13. By the end of June 1981, over 10,000 persons had left Viet Nam for resettlement in over 24 countries of new residence under the Orderly Departure Programme, which began with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and the Government of Viet Nam on 30 May 1979.
14. The purpose of this programme is to provide a humanitarian alternative to persons wishing to leave Viet Nam. While departures under this Programme continue to take place regularly, the number of departures remains substantially lower than had been hoped. The rate at which orderly departures take place is necessarily determined by the rate at which exit visas are made available by the Vietnamese authorities and by the rate at which persons authorized to leave Viet Nam can be accepted for resettlement in third countries. The recent trend towards an increase in departures has been encouraging with 710 persons departing during the month of July 1981 alone. The High Commissioner will continue his efforts to implement this Programme and appeals to all Governments concerned to support his activities.
15. The Office continues its efforts to facilitate the resettlement of Kampucheans from Viet Nam, in particular those with family or other ties abroad. In 1980, the Office assisted in the resettlement of 1,892 Kampucheans from Viet Nam to some 12 different countries of new residence. For the period January to June 1981, the figure was 748. Of the estimated 33,000 Kampucheans in Viet Nam, a number wish to join relatives in third countries.

16. The Chinese authorities continue to identify family reunion cases amongst the some 263,000 Vietnamese who crossed the border and sought asylum in China in 1978. Several thousand of these refugees are thought to have close family links abroad and may need resettlement assistance. As of 30 June 1981 a total of 100 family reunion cases departed China for permanent resettlement. In addition, of the some 340 persons rescued at sea by Chinese vessels, most of whom are of Vietnamese ethnic origin, 227 departed to third countries.

17. While the influx of Vietnamese boat cases to various countries of first asylum continues, many Vietnamese find themselves in situations of great danger on the high seas and are rescued by passing ships. The High Commissioner wishes to express his appreciation to the crew and the ship-owners of the many vessels who, despite difficulties, are adhering to the principles and maritime traditions of rescuing persons in distress on the high seas, due in large part to the support they receive from countries of registry or ownership in providing resettlement guarantees. During the course of 1980 a total of 15,563 persons were rescued by 218 ships flying the flags of 25 countries. During the first six months of 1981, a further 9,027 persons were rescued by 120 ships from 16 countries. It is important that resettlement guarantees continue to be accorded as in the past, in order not to affect the current disembarkation policies of countries of first asylum.

18. The Disembarkation Resettlement Offer scheme, DISERO, was introduced in late 1979 to facilitate the disembarkation of Indo-Chinese rescued by vessels of States unable to provide the resettlement guarantee required by certain countries of asylum. A total of 1,190 places have been contributed to the reserve by seven countries. As of 30 June 1981, 327 places remained in the reserve. Since the scheme came into operation, it has permitted a total of 690 persons to disembark from rescuing vessels, although some were subsequently resettled within normal resettlement programmes. The High Commissioner would ask those countries, which do not have major merchant fleets of their own to allocate to DISERO a small number of places within their current resettlement programmes to permit further groups to disembark.

19. The period under review witnessed the completion of the construction of Refugee Processing Centres (RPCs) both at Bataan in the Philippines and on Galang Island, Indonesia. With a capacity of 17,000 and 10,000 persons respectively, these centres were of value in providing facilities for language training and cultural orientation to better prepare refugees for their new countries of residence. The centres also proved useful in assisting in the disembarkation of large numbers of persons rescued at sea who could not immediately proceed to their final country of resettlement. Since the two centres opened, a total of 44,345 and 15,760 persons have transited through Bataan and Galang respectively.

20. In order to better prepare applicants for final resettlement, a comprehensive programme for language training and orientation is being implemented in consultation with concerned Governments and voluntary agencies in various countries of South-East Asia. This programme consists of regular language training for all refugees awaiting resettlement as well as intensive language training and orientation for those proceeding to the United States. These training programmes are being implemented by specialized voluntary agencies in first asylum camps, as well as in RPCs, and is benefiting some 3,100 refugees per month.

21. In 1980 and 1981 efforts continued, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, on an intensive programme for the documentation, tracing and reunification of unaccompanied Kampuchean minors in Thailand. By April 1980, UNHCR and voluntary agency social workers had registered over 2,600 unaccompanied minors living in children's centres. By 30 June 1981, the UNHCR/ICRC tracing programme had facilitated the reunion of 1,593 of these children with family members in and between holding centres, at the border and in third countries. A further 265 children, including the very young and the sick, have been sent for third country fostering. Today, only 840 children live in the children's centres. To reinforce efforts to develop a successful tracing programme inside Kampuchea, UNHCR and ICRC have prepared a tracing package to be implemented in conjunction with the authorities concerned and the Kampuchean Red Cross.

22. Another vulnerable group on whose behalf special efforts were made were the socially, physically or mentally handicapped. Handicapped refugees who do not have close family ties in any resettlement country have become increasingly difficult to resettle, despite the fact that prolonged confinement in camps can have additional damaging effects on handicapped/disabled persons. It is hoped that during the International Year of the Disabled countries of resettlement will earmark a reasonable proportion of their quota for families with handicapped refugees and their families, particularly those who do not have ties with a country of resettlement. The High Commissioner has recently appealed to interested Governments in this respect.

23. Governments will recall that a Workshop on the Integration of Indo-Chinese in Countries of Resettlement was held from 29 September to 3 October 1980 to exchange information on methods and procedures of integration. Out of this workshop, and in line with the Executive Committee's request at its thirty-first session that the High Commissioner examine the best way of promoting such a request, came the recommendation to establish an International Refugee Integration Resource Centre (IRIRC) in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Committee on Migration (ICM) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). An agreement has been formalized by a Memorandum of Understanding between the three parties for the establishment of such a centre in the second half of 1981.

24. The High Commissioner wishes to emphasize the continuing need for resettlement opportunities for Indo-Chinese. As of 30 June 1980 there were 63,310 "boat people", some 105,000 land cases, a significant number of whom have specifically requested to be resettled, and at least 25,000 new Kampucheans in processing centres in Thailand awaiting departure. As the High Commissioner had the opportunity to express to Governments at a technical meeting on resettlement held in Geneva on 9 July 1981, resettlement has hitherto remained the main durable solution for the Indo-Chinese groups in South-East Asia. Taking into account the fact that some large available quotas remain unused, it is of utmost importance to expedite the processing and actual movement of existing Indo-Chinese refugees and displaced persons in South East Asia and try to exhaust, to the extent possible, the available

opportunities for resettlement. For those countries whose annual quotas have been filled, a renewal of special quotas, or an increase of such offers whenever possible, would be welcome. In the meantime, the High Commissioner continues to explore the possibility of resettling Indo-Chinese in developing countries, particularly in Latin America.

C. Latin America

25. While the largest influx of new refugee groups in 1980 and the early part of 1981 grew out of disturbances in Central America, the vast majority of these refugees have been allowed to remain in such countries as Belize, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama and assistance was provided to enable them to settle locally. This along with resettlement within the region are considered the most appropriate solutions. However, individual cases of family reunion or other persons in particular need were resettled outside the region, as required.

26. Elsewhere in Latin America, the situation continued to require close attention. Refugees were registered for resettlement in Argentina and Brazil along with smaller numbers in Peru, while others applied to join family members already resettled abroad. As of 30 June 1981 the number of refugees awaiting resettlement stood at 314 persons, the majority in Brazil, while a further 1,045 persons, mainly in Chile and Bolivia, awaited family reunion.

27. During the course of 1980 a total of 1,526 were resettled from Latin America with an additional 889 persons resettled during the first six months of 1981. This brings to 27,038 persons the total number of persons resettled from Latin America under UNHCR auspices since September 1973.

28. As has been the trend in recent years, it has been the efforts of a relatively small number of countries that has enabled the influx of new refugees to be balanced by a proportionally steady level of resettlement. It must be stressed that the needs in Latin America require ongoing efforts to prevent an excessive build-up of new cases awaiting resettlement. In this connection, the High Commissioner is most appreciative of those countries who have already announced their intention to continue participating in these efforts.

D. Europe

29. The increase in the number of asylum seekers from Eastern Europe arriving in such first asylum countries as Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy caused concern to the local authorities and strained local resources, particularly in the matter of accommodation. At the request of the Austrian authorities, an appeal was issued on 12 June 1981 by the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) for increased resettlement opportunities for these persons. The High Commissioner continued to follow the situation closely and appreciates whatever support can be given by resettlement countries in response to the ICM appeal.

30. Many Western European countries continued to experience an influx of spontaneous arrivals, many of them from the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan. In some cases visa restrictions were tightened, particularly with respect to those refugees who had already been granted asylum in another country. Host Governments offered permanent resettlement to a number of those persons, while others have found their way to countries overseas or returned to their countries of first asylum.

E. Western Asia

31. During the period under review, unsettled conditions in the Near East, Middle East and events in the Horn of Africa created small but nonetheless significant numbers of refugees including some from several minority groups in the area. For most of these cases, resettlement was the only valid solution. In addition, a limited number of Afghan refugees in the area applied for resettlement, mostly for reasons of family reunion.

III. Conclusions

32. UNHCR's expenditures in 1980, mostly for transportation costs and for other costs related to resettlement processing, amounted to \$ 22.5 million. Most of the transportation was entrusted to the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM). As in previous years, UNHCR financed transportation costs through ICM in those cases where transportation was not covered by the Government of the country of resettlement. Funds were also used to finance resettlement counselling, mass registration, medical examinations, and regular language training programmes. In certain countries willing to admit refugees but unable to bear alone the costs of integrating them, UNHCR provided financial assistance and prepared plans to help in the refugee's integration.

33. In the period under review, the co-operation of the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration, the International Committee of the Red Cross and many voluntary agencies was instrumental in ensuring the smooth operation of **resettlement** activities in various parts of the world. ICM provided valuable services in arranging transportation, while ICRC intensified its activities in tracing relatives, most notably for unaccompanied Kampuchean minors in Thailand. Voluntary agencies played crucial roles by taking a very active part in reception and integration arrangements and by sustaining public interest through individual sponsorships.

34. The broadening of acceptance criteria to include refugees who hitherto stood little chance of being accepted under earlier criteria (such as has been the case in particular for refugees in Africa) has been encouraging. The overriding consideration in determining criteria must indeed be a humanitarian one, as it is often those refugees who do not have family or other connections abroad who find themselves most in need of resettlement. It is essential that criteria be as flexible as possible to include all categories of refugees for whom other durable solutions are not available. In this connection, mention must be made of the handicapped refugees in this the International Year of the Disabled. Although both mentally and physically handicapped persons continue

to be admitted under the "Ten or More Plan", the fact remains that it is precisely those refugees who are most in need of resettlement who are amongst the most difficult to place.

35. Despite the remarkable efforts made on behalf of refugees and displaced persons from South-East Asia, one must not lose sight of the fact that the needs for their resettlement persist and that refugees in other parts of the world are often in situations of equal distress, where alternative durable solutions are not available and where resettlement is the only solution which can offer the possibility of a productive and secure life.