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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Assistance to refugees and displaced persons in MalawiReport of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Noting that a United Nations inter-agency mission had been sent to Malawi to ascertain the type and the magnitude of assistance required for the refugees and displaced persons in Malawi, the General Assembly adopted resolution 42/132 entitled "Assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Malawi" on 7 December 1987. In paragraph 2 of the resolution, the Assembly requested "the Secretary-General, in close co-operation with the High Commissioner for Refugees and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, to give the report of the inter-agency mission the widest possible circulation to all States, all pertinent international organisations and voluntary agencies".
2. In paragraph 3 of the same resolution, the General Assembly further requested "the Secretary-General, in close co-operation with the High Commissioner for Refugees and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, to mobilise international assistance and to launch an international appeal for generous contributions to the projects and programmes recommended in the report of the inter-agency mission".
3. Finally, in the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its forty-third session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is prepared in response to that request.

II. BACKGROUND

4. Malawi is a landlocked country bordered by the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique. It has a population of some 7.9 million people and covers an area of 119,000 square kilometres. It is classified by the United Nations as a least developed country.
5. While refugees began arriving in Malawi in substantial numbers as of late 1980, Mozambicans have been registered during the 1970s and early 1980s. In some cases, ethnic background, family ties, language and intermarriage facilitated the entry and spontaneous settlement of these refugees into the rural areas of Malawi. These persons regularly crossed the border to tend to their own fields in Mozambique and, as such, were self-sufficient. Those who arrived from the southern areas of Mozambique, however, concentrated in camp-like locations as there were no integration possibilities owing to a lack of land and linguistic and kinship groups. In the early 1980s, only a few hundred Mozambicans, mostly of urban background, were considered of direct concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and subsequently individual assistance was provided to those persons through the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Malawi. However, in June 1986, the number of Mozambicans entering Malawi began to rise substantially and, by the end of September, it was estimated that a total of 70,000 persons had sought refuge, the majority being settled in border regions, primarily in the central and southern regions.

6. Mozambican refugees are found in eight of the country's 24 districts. As at 1 June 1988, the breakdown was as follows: 1/

<u>District</u>	<u>Refugee population</u>
Lilongwe	16 428
Dedza	119 667
Ntcheu	128 880
Mangochi	21 391
Mulanje	12 391
Chikwawa	17 093
Nsanje	193 927
Mwanza	<u>22 892</u>
Total	<u>552 669</u>

III. REPORT OF THE INTER-AGENCY MISSION

7. The United Nations inter-agency mission visited Malawi from September to December 1987. In brief, the mission report describes the massive problems confronting Malawi as a result of the influx of refugees and displaced persons from neighbouring Mozambique and indicates the type and quantities of assistance required to address both emergency needs and long-term development goals. Other highlights of the report are mentioned below.

8. The mission visited all eight districts directly affected by the displaced persons influx and found that the rural subsistence economy was under severe strain owing to the added burden of displaced persons support. Food production and water resources in the affected areas are insufficient to satisfy the needs of both the Malawi population and the displaced persons. The ecological environment has been severely damaged by the wood cutting on and expanding cultivation to fragile hillsides. Health, education and community services are also heavily strained. The mission concluded that the Malawi economy would not be able to cope with the expanded emergency conditions without major support from the international community and substantial development investment.

9. Assistance for emergency and development estimated at \$90.8 million will be required in 1988: \$54.3 million of this is related to food supply and logistics, \$11.5 million for basic services of water, health and education, and \$25 million for a programme of public works, including forestry and land husbandry, irrigation and land reclamation to increase cultivable land area and expand food production.

10. The approach recommended in the report reflects the policy of UNDP and UNHCR to work together on programmes that link emergency aid to refugees and displaced persons with long-term development assistance of benefit to all concerned. It calls for a series of actions to relieve the current situation and foster Malawi's long-term development and economic growth.

11. At the time of the preparation of the report, it was estimated that more than 360,000 Mozambican refugees and displaced persons had crossed the border and were living in eight districts of Malawi. The proportion of refugees and displaced persons in the total population of these districts had reached an average 9.4 per cent. The two most severely affected areas, Nsanje and Ntcheu/Dedza, were each supporting more than 150,000 refugees and displaced persons.

12. During 1987, UNHCR provided food supplies with a commercial value of about \$4 million to Mozambican refugees and displaced persons in Malawi. However, for months and even years before official assistance began, the rural Malawian community had assisted their fleeing neighbours. Many households in the affected areas are now short of food because they shared what they had with those seeking refuge. Water supplies, hospitals and health centres, all barely sufficient to serve the Malawian communities, were extended equally to Mozambican refugees and displaced persons. The Government provided a large number of poles to build shelter for the refugees and displaced persons and permitted them to use firewood, even though this resulted in environmental damage.

13. The action programme put forward by the report is an integrated package of economic development initiatives, addressing both emergency needs and long-term development goals. Many of the proposals relate to long-term priorities of the Malawian Government to which the extra economic stress arising from the refugees influx has given added importance. Some relate to basic needs for food, water, health, education and community services. Others are concerned with job creation and income-generating activities, such as public works programmes and the development of small-scale industries. For example, investment for irrigation and land reclamation in the lower Shire Valley is called for in order to increase agricultural production. This region, which has the largest concentration of refugees and displaced persons, suffers chronic food deficits even under normal conditions.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSISTANCE

A. Action taken by the Secretary-General

14. In compliance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of General Assembly resolution 42/132, the Secretary-General arranged for the issuance of a press release on 10 February 1988, calling the attention of the international community to the contents of the report of the inter-agency mission. This was followed by a communication on 25 March 1988 addressed to all States Members of the United Nations, as well as non-member States with observer status, transmitting copies of the inter-agency report and soliciting their generous contributions to ensure the implementation of the projects and programmes recommended in the report.

B. Action taken by the Government of Malawi

15. From the very beginning of the Mozambican exodus, the Government and people of Malawi have maintained a generous and exemplary attitude in the reception and

assistance of asylum seekers. Services and facilities have been equally shared with the local population, and the Malawi Red Cross was entrusted with refugee assistance.

16. It was not until December 1986 that the Government decided to establish the Joint Operations Committee (JOC) to co-ordinate relief efforts of the various Government departments and agencies. The Ministry of Health was assigned as the focal point for all refugee-related matters.

17. In early 1987, the Government of Malawi invited UNHCR to assist Mozambicans. An office was opened in Lilongwe on the premises of UNDP. In November 1987, the Republic of Malawi became a signatory to the 1951 Convention 2/ and the 1967 Protocol 3/ relating to the Status of Refugees. The country has also ratified the 1969 Convention of the Organisation of African Unity on refugees.

18. At the Consultative Group meeting organized by the World Bank in Paris, France, in June 1988, the Government of Malawi requested that the situation of the displaced persons and refugees in Malawi be included on the agenda. A statement made by the Government urgently requested the donor community to extend support not only to ongoing development projects in the affected areas, but also to new project proposals contained in the inter-agency report. This appraisal was intended to ensure that the economy effectively served the displaced persons and refugees, as well as the local population.

C. Action taken by the United Nations Development Programme

19. Following distribution of the report to the international community both within and outside Malawi, the Administrator of UNDP visited Malawi in March 1988 to assess within the development framework the problems facing the country as a result of the influx of Mozambican displaced persons and refugees. Following his visit, the Administrator of UNDP has established a UNDP Task Force chaired by the Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Africa. This Task Force serves as an advisory body for the examination and direction of policy, the monitoring of related developments, and information sharing with respect to refugee-related matters and displaced persons issues.

20. In June 1988, UNDP fielded a formulation mission for a priority project in the health sector. Upon receipt of Government clearance of the project document, it will be submitted to a donor who has already expressed interest in funding this project.

D. Action taken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and other organizations of the United Nations system

21. UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) have recently assessed the basic food requirements of the refugees and consideration is being given to correct some apparent imbalances. In consequence, some 2,311 metric tons of food for the

supplementary and therapeutic feeding programmes will be provided. Owing to the insecurity of the roads in Mozambique, regular food supply and logistics have been a problem for landlocked Malawi. As a result, a buffer stock is being established. Indeed, it is only recently that food commodities have begun to arrive in sufficient quantities and in a timely manner. Needless to say, both the nutrition and logistics situation are closely monitored.

22. WFP is co-ordinating the supply of basic food. The basic rations and tonnages for an average planning figure of 530,000 refugees in 1988 are as follows:

(Metric tons)

Cereals	400 g/person/day	78 756	WFP
Pulses	40 " "	7 759	WFP
Groundnuts	40 " "	7 759	WFP
Sugar	20 " "	3 880	UNHCR
Salt	5 " "	970	UNHCR

23. For water, the objective is to provide a minimum of 15 litres of potable water per capita per day. Locations for boreholes are being identified and drilled and existing shallow wells are being upgraded. An international voluntary agency (Save the Children Fund - United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) has been identified to assist the Water Department of Malawi with technical expertise.

24. Shelter with plastic sheeting and tarpaulins and other infrastructure has been provided to cover the needs of vulnerable families. A site planning team is currently surveying refugee sites to replan overcrowded settlement patterns and develop new sites. Additional transit centres in certain locations have been constructed to provide temporary facilities for refugees pending construction of their own dwellings.

25. Domestic items such as blankets, clothing, soap, water containers and cooking sets are being provided. Basic supplies from UNHCR are supplemented by materials from non-governmental organizations active in Malawi.

26. Community development activities aim at refugee participation, services to the aged and disabled, adult literacy, home economics and income-generating activities. In education, UNHCR is expanding and constructing classrooms in 1988 (on a self-help basis to the extent possible) and instruction has started with Mozambican teachers identified from among the refugee caseload. Instruction is in Portuguese with syllabuses supplied by the Government of Mozambique.

27. Although farming possibilities are limited, owing to the shortage of land, some refugees will be able to benefit from small fruit and vegetable garden projects with the support of the international voluntary agency, Save the Children Fund (Malawi). Other refugees will benefit from increased livestock and veterinary services, fisheries projects and afforestation programmes.

28. Security is a problem facing Mozambicans in Malawi, owing chiefly to the fact that the majority of all refugees are located very close to the border. As such, refugee camps and concentrations have been subject to cross-border raids, looting and kidnapping by armed bandits. In January 1988, a particularly serious incident took place when rebels crossed into Malawi and burnt dwellings, stole food and other relief supplies and forced refugees to carry these goods back to Mozambique. The outcome of the fate of the victims is unknown. The Government of Malawi, however, is doing what it can in the circumstances to ensure refugee security, and UNHCR has increased its presence in affected districts.

29. In late 1987, a joint Government-UNDP-UNHCR technical mission developed a "Report on a programming mission for long-term assistance to areas hosting displaced persons in Malawi". Proposals include the strengthening of long-term development of infrastructure, income-generating (often in the form of agriculture programmes) and wage-earning projects. UNDP has circulated the proposals to prospective donors, some of whom may consider possible future participation. In the meantime, UNHCR has included modest allocations for income-generation, reforestation, agriculture and fisheries in the 1988 and 1989 UNHCR programme budgets.

30. It is also important to recognize that the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations are also engaged in the formulation of programmes aimed at supporting the Government's development efforts.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

31. While voluntary repatriation remains the most desirable solution for the refugees in Malawi, it appears that large-scale return is unlikely in the immediate future. While every effort will be made to avoid undue dependency, it is clear that the Government of Malawi and the international community are facing a care and maintenance operation for the foreseeable future.

32. The response of the international community to the Secretary-General's appeal, calling for generous contributions to assist refugees and displaced persons in Malawi, has yet to meet with an adequate response, particularly in respect of projects which are development related. This has meant that progress has been slow in formulating some of the projects needed to strengthen overburdened essential services and facilities in localities where refugees are concentrated.

Notes

1/ As at 30 June 1988, the total refugee caseload stood at 610,092. At the end of July 1989, it is expected to amount to 630,000.

2/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, No. 2545, p. 150.

3/ Ibid., vol. 606, No. 8791, p. 267.
