

ADDENDUM
TO THE
REPORT
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL RECORDS: TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

SUPPLEMENT No. 12B (A/9612/Add.2)



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New York, 1974

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ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Report on the South Asian subcontinent repatriation operation

Introduction

1. The problems facing the many thousands of stranded Bengalis in Pakistan and non-Bengalis in Bangladesh following the 1971 conflict were among the humanitarian issues which were discussed during a visit by the Secretary-General to the South Asian subcontinent early in 1973.
2. In late March and early April 1973, following these discussions, the Governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan appealed to the Secretary-General for assistance in the organization of a limited repatriation movement between Bangladesh and Pakistan. On 13 April 1973, in response to these requests, the Secretary-General asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to assume responsibility within the United Nations system for this operation. The High Commissioner visited Bangladesh and Pakistan in May as arrangements progressed for a small-scale operation. The first group of 452 Bengali seamen and students left Karachi for Dacca between 11 and 13 July 1973 on board an aircraft chartered by UNHCR.
3. On 28 August 1973, an Agreement between India and Pakistan was signed at New Delhi. It provided for the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian internees in India, of Bengalis from Pakistan to Bangladesh and of a substantial number of such non-Bengalis from Bangladesh as were stated to have opted for repatriation to Pakistan. Embodied in the Agreement was the principle of simultaneity of these three movements. The movement of the prisoners of war and civilian internees was the responsibility of the Government of India. Soon after the New Delhi Agreement, the Governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan requested the assistance of the Secretary-General in implementing the terms of the New Delhi Agreement as regards the repatriation between their two countries. In turn, the Secretary-General asked the High Commissioner to continue his role as executing agent, this time for an operation on a far larger scale.
4. An appeal to the international community for support for the United Nations humanitarian assistance in the subcontinent was made by the Secretary-General on 13 September 1973, with a special request for resources to enable the High Commissioner to ensure the rapid accomplishment of the task entrusted to him.

Planning

5. Since for many reasons use of the overland route across India had to be ruled out, the choice of a means of transport lay between aircraft and ships. After investigation, it was clear that it would be more economical for UNHCR to charter aircraft. This had the additional advantages of speed and flexibility.

6. UNHCR estimated the total cost of organizing and carrying out the repatriation by air at \$US 14.3 million. This estimate perforce included many variables and unknowns, but was based on the experience gained by the High Commissioner's Office during the limited repatriation operations carried out in July and August 1973. It was realized that if aircraft or ships suitable for the purposes of the operation could be made available free of charge by Governments, then the total cost would be correspondingly reduced. The logistical framework of the operation was determined in consultation with the Governments concerned in the subcontinent and with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), both at the planning stage and throughout the operation.

Contributions

7. An appeal for \$US 14.3 million was made by the High Commissioner on 20 September 1973 in an aide-mémoire sent to all States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies. This met with a very generous response from the international community. By 1 July 1974, cash contributions to UNHCR from 24 Governments amounted to \$US 10,665,273. One Government contributed aircraft to UNHCR. Details of these contributions may be found in annex I below. Of the cash contributed, 89 per cent was spent on aircraft charters, some 7 per cent was transferred to ICRC and some 4 per cent was spent on UNHCR administrative costs.

8. Two Governments made bilateral contributions of aircraft and a ship which were integrated in the over-all repatriation operation. Details are given at annex II.

Conduct of the operation

9. To ensure that the repatriation movements took place smoothly and swiftly, a special unit was set up at UNHCR headquarters, Geneva, while representation was established at Dacca, Karachi and, for short periods, at Chittagong and Lahore. These were the arrival and departure points of the repatriates. The operation began rapidly and progressed satisfactorily. By 31 December 1973, over 110,000 persons had been repatriated, and by 31 March 1974 the repatriation of Bengalis from Pakistan was virtually completed. On 30 April 1974, the Government of India, with the assistance and under the auspices of ICRC, completed the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian internees, the principle of simultaneity provided for in the New Delhi Agreement having been observed.

10. When the operation ended on 1 July 1974, 230,439 persons had been moved (121,695 from Pakistan to Bangladesh and 108,744 from Bangladesh to Pakistan).

11. Additionally, in a series of limited operations carried out between April 1973 and March 1974 at the request of the Governments concerned, UNHCR also moved to Pakistan by air 10,868 non-Bengalis stranded in Nepal. Although not directly related to the New Delhi Agreement of 28 August 1973, this movement formed part of the United Nations humanitarian assistance in the subcontinent.

12. The movements of all aircraft participating in the operation, as well as those of the ship, were fully co-ordinated by UNHCR, in agreement with the Governments concerned. Aircraft were chartered by UNHCR on the basis of world-wide

tenders. UNHCR benefited from the technical facilities and services of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) in obtaining the tenders, in the concluding of the majority of the charter agreements and in contacts with the airlines on operational matters.

Role of the International Committee of the Red Cross

13. The co-operation and work of ICRC, whose assistance in the implementation of the New Delhi Agreement had been requested by the Governments concerned, were indispensable to the success of the operation. ICRC was responsible for the registration of all persons applying for repatriation, for obtaining clearances for departure and entry from the respective Governments concerned, for issuing the necessary travel documents, and for the general processing of repatriates prior to departure. In order to carry out this work ICRC had to maintain large numbers of staff in various locations in the two countries. Close liaison was maintained with ICRC both at Geneva and on the subcontinent throughout the operation.

Role of Governments and United Nations agencies

14. Credit for the success of the operation is due first to the co-operation at every level of the Governments of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Specific measures included the waiving or reduction of handling and landing charges, the granting of free overflying rights and the closest co-operation in the detailed and daily organization of the repatriation movement.

15. Valuable assistance was also provided by members of the United Nations system operating on the subcontinent. In Bangladesh, assistance was provided by the United Nations Special Relief Office in Bangladesh (UNROB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), while in Pakistan UNDP and the United Nations Military Observer to the Governments of India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) both played an important role, the latter by facilitating communications. Similarly, UNDP in Nepal was closely involved in the airlifts from Kathmandu.

Conclusion

16. This operation added a new chapter to the humanitarian endeavours of the United Nations on the subcontinent in recent years. That it could be completed satisfactorily is a tribute to the generosity of the contributing Governments and to the remarkable understanding UNHCR received from the Governments of the subcontinent in what was a most sensitive and delicate task.

17. The New Delhi Agreement of 28 August 1973 expressed the hope that the repatriation provided for therein would help promote reconciliation in the subcontinent and create an atmosphere favourable to a meeting of the three countries. This hope would seem to have been fulfilled since, in a second Agreement, signed at New Delhi on 9 April 1974, the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan noted that the repatriation had "generated an atmosphere of reconciliation and paved the way for normalization of relations in the subcontinent".

ANNEX I

Contributions to UNHCRUnited States dollars1. Cash(a) Governments

Australia	650,000	a/
Austria	200,000	
Botswana	5,006	
Canada	1,000,000	b/
Denmark	700,000	
Finland	181,000	
Germany, Federal Republic of	179,856	
Holy See	30,000	
Iraq	9,953	
Japan	1,000,000	
Liechtenstein	3,236	
Luxembourg	13,269	
Netherlands	592,308	
New Zealand	200,000	
Norway	630,353	
Philippines	5,000	
Rwanda	1,000	
Sierra Leone	23,000	
Sweden	661,000	
Switzerland	15,625	
Turkey	10,000	
Uganda	2,898	
United Republic of Cameroon	833	
United States of America	4,550,000	c/

(b) Private donors

936

Total cash contributions

10,665,2732. Kind

United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

1,629,628 d/

a/ Including \$US 50,000 transferred to ICRC.

b/ Including \$US 250,000 transferred to ICRC.

c/ Including \$US 350,000 transferred to ICRC.

d/ Two Britannia aircraft. Value agreed with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and represents commercial cost to UNHCR of equivalent seat capacity over same period.

ANNEX II

Governmental bilateral contributions

Persons moved

German Democratic Republic:

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------|
| (<u>a</u>) One aircraft, 14 November-29 December 1973 | } | Almost 10,000 |
| (<u>b</u>) One aircraft, 26 March-23 April 1974 | | |

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| (<u>a</u>) One aircraft, 8 October-18 November 1973 | Over 12,000 |
| (<u>b</u>) One ship, October 1973-March 1974 | Over 9,000 |

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