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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

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PLAN FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF A GROUP OF REFUGEES IN SENEGAL

(Submitted by the High Commissioner)

A. Introduction

1. In June 1964, the Government of Senegal addressed a communication to the High Commissioner in which it drew attention to the presence in its territory of a fairly large group of refugees and requested his assistance in solving the resultant problems. A representative of the High Commissioner went out in August to study the problem on the spot. During his visit, an assistance programme was drawn up which would entail a financial contribution by the High Commissioner. This proposal is now submitted to the Committee for its approval.
2. The facts of the problem could hardly be set out more clearly than in the official report which the Government of Senegal recently transmitted to the Office of the High Commissioner on this subject. The authors of this report, after observing that "it is prompted solely by concern for the humanitarian and social problem posed by the refugees", state that the first groups did not "constitute a problem for the Republic of Senegal".

"The Government while remaining vigilant and keeping a watch on the population movement which, although limited at first appeared likely to increase, did not however have to intervene directly. The local inhabitants themselves were able to arrange for the reception of the refugees.

"They belong to the same ethnic groups ... they speak the same dialects, have the same customs and even till the same fields; moreover, they have family ties in both the narrower and wider sense of the term.

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"The existence of these various factors made it easier to take in the refugees. Spontaneously, and without any action by the authorities or any national organization, the villages along the frontier succeeded in dealing with the situation. Generally speaking, the refugees were simply absorbed into Senegalese households ...

"Soon, however, ... other refugees, some of whom had no special ties with the local population, joined the first arrivals.

"Although there was no limit to the generosity of the local people, their means, limited as they were, soon proved inadequate and it became necessary for the Government to help them.

"At the same time, other organizations such as the 'Secours Catholique' and the Senegalese Red Cross also came to the assistance of the refugees.

"The first action taken by the authorities was to provide seeds, food and medical care.

"The 'Secours Catholique' distributed food and some medicines, while the Senegalese Red Cross provided blankets and mosquito nets, but the quantities provided were very small in comparison with the need.

.....

"Thus, up to May 1964, thanks to the joint efforts of the local inhabitants, the Government and the above-mentioned organizations, it was possible to meet the most pressing needs.

"After that date, there was an even larger influx of refugees ... According to an official census, they numbered 6,000 during the first quarter of the year, whereas on 31 July 1964 they numbered about 30,000."

3. The report goes on to say that "the Government and people of Senegal are now overburdened and at the end of their resources" as a result of the growing influx of refugees and points out that the Republic of Senegal has not yet succeeded in overcoming a serious food shortage. In the climate of Senegal only one crop can be harvested a year; this takes place after the rainy season which, in Casamance - the area where the refugees are concentrated - lasts from June to October. The Senegalese farmer thus has difficulty in bridging the gap between crops.

B. Situation of the refugees and proposed measures

4. The refugees mainly cross the frontier during the rainy season. It is estimated that 6,000 people entered Senegal in this way in 1963 and 24,000 in 1964. Nearly all the refugees are living in the Casamance province, their distribution by districts being as follows: Sedhiou (14,600), Kolda (10,800), Velingara (1,100) and Ziguinchor (2,250). For the most part the refugees are farmers and those coming from the same village usually tend to cling together.

5. The 6,000 refugees who arrived before 1964 are on the whole better off than the more recent arrivals. Some of them have been able to build themselves huts and to till a plot of land. Since such work is impossible during the rainy season, most of the others have had to take refuge with the local inhabitants and have not been able to grow any crops. They were warmly welcomed by the inhabitants, who shared their homes and food with them. But this hospitality is now becoming a burden to the local population, which is short of food until the next harvest in October–November 1964. Thus, the Government is at present faced with the urgent problem of providing food for some 60,000 people (30,000 refugees and 30,000 Senegalese) and has had to take steps to ensure that these pressing needs are met during the months of September and October 1964. Subsequently, food will have to be provided for the refugees alone until they have been able to harvest their first crop, i.e. until October 1965. The basic food requirements have been met by a contribution of 4,800 tons of maize meal, provided by the United States Government through a voluntary agency, but funds have to be found to cover the cost of transporting these supplies from the port of landing to the distribution points.

6. Another urgent problem, affecting both the local inhabitants and the refugees, is the public health situation. The few dispensaries that exist in Casamance have been completely overwhelmed by the influx of some 24,000 people in three months. The population of some villages has suddenly doubled or even trebled. Reference is made to one village where the population of 50 Senegalese has been swollen by 455 refugees. The hospital at Ziguinchor can no longer take in all emergency cases and the labour exchange there has had to be converted into a temporary hospital. Preventive measures must be taken at once against epidemics of yellow fever and smallpox, and against malaria, which is prevalent in Casamance.

7. Blankets and clothing are also needed. Owing to the humidity, the local inhabitants usually sleep on a bed covered with a blanket as a protection against the damp ground. The refugees are poorly dressed; in preference to providing them with European clothes, which are unsuitable for their way of life, it would be better to obtain cloth which can be made up on the spot into traditional clothing.

8. So far as long-term planning is concerned, there seems little possibility at present of the voluntary repatriation of the refugees and the Government of Senegal is therefore "prepared to allocate to the refugees sufficient arable land to provide them with a standard of living similar to that of the Senegalese farmers"; this would be done "in areas further away from the frontier and in the neighbourhood of existing villages, so that the refugees can benefit from the public services available there". In addition to placing the necessary land at the disposal of the refugees, the measures proposed provide for the distribution of a few domestic utensils and essential tools and for the sinking of wells in order to provide a water supply.

9. It is planned that the assistance programme, and particularly the land settlement measures, will be carried out by the Government, which will be assisted by such bodies as the Senegalese Red Cross and voluntary agencies where relief and health measures are concerned. It is desirable, however, in order to ensure the success of the plan, that the Office of the High Commissioner should share with the authorities concerned the experience it has gained in carrying out similar programmes. To that end, UNHCR should appoint a representative in Senegal for the period required. It is also recommended that two instructors should be stationed in Casamance; they could be voluntary workers but they would however have to be provided with the necessary facilities to enable them to carry out their work.

C. Assistance budget

10. The budget for the assistance proposed is as follows:

I. Relief up to and including October 1965

(a) Transport of foodstuffs

Transport (from the port of landing to Casamance) of 4,800 tons of maize meal provided by the United States Government through Secours Catholique at the rate of 10 kg per month per head for 60,000 persons for two months and for 30,000 persons for twelve months, at francs CFA 7 per kg:

francs CFA 33,600,000^{1/}

US \$

137,100

^{1/} The conversions are in round figures (\$1 = francs CFA 245)

(b) Health

US \$

The health services to be provided in 1964 and 1965 include smallpox and tetanus vaccination campaigns, the distribution of Nivaquine for malaria prevention and the establishment of two mobile teams of three persons with special vehicles and with the equipment, supplies and medicines necessary for the provision of medical treatment. The High Commissioner proposes to make a contribution of up to \$20,000 towards this expenditure, which it has not yet been possible to calculate exactly but which will in any case considerably exceed the amount of this allocation.

20,000

(c) Mosquito nets

(For those refugees who have already built their huts)

francs CFA 1,400,000

5,700

II. Settlement programme

(a) Household equipment

The distribution to 4,000 families of one mosquito net, one cooking pot and one sheet of corrugated iron (door for the hut) per family.

francs CFA 10,900,000

44,500

(b) Tools

(In addition to 1,000 axes and 3,000 hoes already distributed as a result of a voluntary gift)

2,000 axes, 3,000 machetes and 500 hoes

francs CFA 2,200,000

9,000

(c) Boreholes

50 wells at francs CFA 75,000 each

francs CFA 3,750,000

15,300

III. Joint expenditure

(a) Instructors

Equipment (including two cross-country vehicles) and operating expenses of two unpaid instructors stationed in Casamance, approximately

10,000

(b) Administrative expenditure

The establishment at Dakar of an office of the UNHCR for one year and the related administrative costs will entail expenditure that cannot be absorbed in the regular administrative budget of the Office of the High Commissioner (section 20 of the budget estimates of the United Nations). The High Commissioner therefore requests authorization from the Executive Committee to charge this expenditure to the material assistance programme up to an amount not exceeding

36,500

Total

278,100

11. It is pointed out that the relatively low budget in relation to the number of refugees is due to the fact that considerable contributions have already been secured from governmental and private sources (food from the United States, land, etc.) and that the funds required for land settlement have been calculated on a very economical basis. Furthermore, the figure does not include certain indispensable forms of relief, such as the supply of clothes and blankets, for which contributions in cash or in kind outside the programme will be relied upon.

D. Proposals submitted to the Executive Committee for its approval

12. As indicated above, the situation of the refugees and of the local inhabitants during the difficult period between harvests necessitated immediate relief in the form of food distribution and preventive health measures during the months of September and October 1964. In order to meet these pressing needs, the High Commissioner has found it necessary to make an advance of \$60,000 to the Government of Senegal from the Emergency Fund, to be set against the UNHCR contribution to the programme outlined above. If the Committee approves the programme, the High Commissioner proposes to reimburse this sum to the Emergency Fund.

13. So as to enable the whole of the contribution to be financed under the regular programme, the High Commissioner proposes that a total allocation of \$278,100 should be made. In order to provide for the expenditure which he should be in a position to meet in 1964, the High Commissioner proposes that the sum of \$167,000 should be included in the 1964 programme, while the sum of \$111,100 would be included in the 1965 programme. This apportionment of expenditure, which is based on the information at present in the possession of UNHCR, is naturally subject to adjustment and the final figures will depend on how the operation actually develops. The High Commissioner expects to be in a position to state the exact amount of the allocation required for each of these years and to make a report on the problem as a whole at the spring session of the Executive Committee.
14. The High Commissioner will, of course, support the steps taken by the Government of Senegal to obtain assistance from other interested organizations, particularly in connexion with public health.