the flight, exile and return of chadian refugees

a case study
with a special
focus
on
women

A synthesis of research conducted by
MADI PASSANG, NOELLE NODJAL
and the research team of the
Chadian National Institute of Social Sciences

Prepared by CAROL WATSON for the
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

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Preface

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has sponsored a number of case studies in recent years to investigate the social situation of refugees in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These studies have sought, through original field research, to analyse the challenges encountered by different categories of refugees and to evaluate the policies and programmes launched to address their problems. The most recent phase of the research programme focused on returning refugees in African countries — a relatively neglected area in research and policy analysis. But subsequent years have vindicated the practical and policy relevance of this research. UNRISD publications on this subject have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the processes, policies and programmes conducive to the welfare of refugees returning to their countries of origin.*

* **Refugees Returning Home**, Report of the Symposium for the Horn of Africa on the Social and Economic Aspects of Mass Voluntary Return Movements of Refugees (Addis Ababa, 15-17 September 1992), UNRISD, Geneva, March 1993; **When Refugees Go Home: African Experiences**, Tim Allen and Hubert Morsink (eds.), UNRISD, James Currey Ltd. and Africa World Press, London and Trenton, New Jersey, 1994; **In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight and Homecoming in Northeast Africa**, Tim Allen (ed.), UNRISD, James Currey Ltd. and Africa World Press, London and Trenton, New Jersey, 1996.

The issues addressed in the research project included the nature of the obstacles encountered in processes of resettlement and how they have been overcome; the advantages and disadvantages of different programmes of assistance in facilitating such processes; the survival strategies adopted by returned refugee populations; and the degree to which they have been able to positively apply lessons drawn from experiences acquired in exile. The different categories of actors studied included both repatriated refugees and local populations residing in the regions of return. An attempt was made to analyse experiences before, during and after the period of exile.

This monograph investigates the plight of returning refugees in Chad with a focus on women refugees. Like most UNRISD activities, this study has involved collaboration between several parties. Various bilateral and multilateral agencies provided financial and material support for research and for the seminar on the research findings held in N'Djaména. Research guidance and technical backstopping were provided by UNRISD and the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED) in Geneva. The field research was carried out by a team of scholars from the National Institute of Social Sciences in Chad. The project was co-ordinated at UNRISD by Hubert Morsink, and the monograph in its present form was prepared by Carol Watson, based on the findings of the field research and her own study of the Chadian situation.

One of the least developed countries, Chad has gone through the horror of an endless cycle of civil wars: between 1965 and 1992, there were 10 waves of refugees fleeing the country and at least 8 waves of returnees. These events have resulted in dramatic loss of life, collapse of social networks, threats to people's livelihood and destruction of a great deal of the physical infrastructure of the country. This monograph, based upon original data collected through questionnaires and interviews, sheds invaluable light on the experiences of women refugees in exile and after their return to Chad. The personal testimonies of farmers, pastoralists, mothers, widows and wives tell vivid stories of struggle, suffering, trauma and despair — and also of courage and hope.

The monograph argues that, when it comes to real day-to-day problems, it does not make sense to make distinctions between refugees and internally displaced persons or between refugees fleeing from civil war, drought or environmental disaster. Women and children constitute more than 80 per cent of the world's refugees; yet projects for resettlement, employment and income generation continue for the most part to be male-oriented. The monograph brings out the wide diversity in social and economic conditions in different parts of the country. Uniform programmes and projects insensitive to these differences are thus doomed to failure.

One of the interesting points made in the pages that follow relates to changes in attitudes, values, relations and skills brought about by refugees' experiences in exile. For women refugees, this is manifested in an erosion of cultural taboos and social stigma, a new-found freedom in the face of male incapacity, new patterns of gender division of labour, opportunities for learning new occupations, a sense of greater independence, and recognition and forging of new social networks. On return to their regions, many women are forced to conform to traditional social and economic patterns, but the experience in exile often opens up liberating and challenging avenues. There is much in this monograph of interest to scholars of refugee studies and to the policy makers, aid agencies and NGOs involved in settlement and integration of returning refugees.

August 1996

Dharam Ghai
Director, UNRISD

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The present monograph is truly the result of a collaborative effort spanning time and continents and drawing together diverse individuals and institutions in pursuit of the common aim of documenting the experiences of Chadian refugees in flight, exile and return to Chad. The bulk of the credit is due to the Chadian research team at the National Institute of Social Sciences (INSH) in N'Djaména. Working on a difficult topic under difficult circumstances at an institute struggling to rebuild its intellectual heritage after years of war and neglect, all of the researchers without exception deserve congratulations for producing an innovative study of a little known phenomenon. Other individuals offered technical assistance, intellectual guidance and moral support to the team in the course of its work. May they be thanked for their unstinting efforts on behalf of the team and for their many valuable contributions to the present study. The final report benefited greatly from the many useful comments supplied by external reviewers as well as from the close readings and critical observations of the UNRISD Programme Co-ordinator for Refugee Research and the UNRISD editorial staff. Finally, a number of institutions were involved in the research programme, from its inception to implementation and reporting on findings. May they receive thanks for their generous technical and financial support.

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Researchers at the Chadian National Institute for Social Sciences (INSH)

Madi Passang: Team co-ordinator and researcher responsible for Zone A, Chari-Baguirmi (N'Djaména, Karal).

Pagoui Kany: Responsible for the western part of Zone B, comprising the eastern and western Logones (Doba, Moundou, Beinamar).

Mbaïkeng Mempassengar: Responsible for the eastern part of Zone B, comprising Moyen-Chari (Maro, Moïssala, Sarh).

Adoum Souleyman: Responsible for Zone C, comprising Ouaddaï and Biltine (Abougoudam, Abéché, Adré), and for research in Nigeria.

Roaldje Noelle Nodjal: Geographer, responsible for the women's research component in all three zones.

Contributors to the INSH study

Methodological assistance to the team:
Fabrizio Sabelli, Professor of Anthropology at the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED), Geneva.

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Initiation and overall co-ordination of the study

Hubert Morsink, Senior Adviser and Programme Co-ordinator for Refugee Research, UNRISD, Geneva.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AAA	Agro-Action Allemand
APICA	Association for the Promotion of Community Initiatives in Africa
BELACD	Bureau for the Study and Liaison of Charitable and Development Activities
BET	Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti (the northern province of Chad)
BSPE	Office for Statistics, Planning and Study
CAC	Committee for Co-ordination and Action
CAR	Central African Republic
CARE	Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere
CASAU	Committee for Emergency Food Security Activities
CASU	Committee for Emergency Health Activities
CCFAN	Command Council of the Armed Forces of the North (executive body of FAN under Habré)
CDR	Democratic Revolutionary Council (faction in opposition to Habré in the north)
CEFOD	Centre for Study and Training for Development
CESAO	Centre for Social Studies in West Africa
CFPA	Centre for Professional and Agricultural Training (run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)
CFSR	Centre for Rural Social Training
CHD	Chad (abbreviation used in some project

	documents)
CILONG	Centre for Information and Liaison for Non-Governmental Organizations
CNAR	National Committee for the Reception of Refugees
CotonTchad	Chadian cotton company
CRA	Regional Action Committee (established in the post-emergency period)
CRT	Chadian Red Cross
DEFPA	Department for Professional and Agricultural Training
DSEED	Division of Statistical, Economic and Demographic Studies
EDF	European Development Fund
FAC	Fund for Aid and Co-operation (French)
FAN	Armed Forces of the North (coalition of northern military leaders fighting Tombalbaye and later name of Habré's forces)
FANT	Chadian National Armed Forces (unified national army of Chad under Habré, formed of merger of elements from FAN, FAT and *codos*)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAP	People's Armed Forces (army of Goukouni Oueddei supported by Libya until 1986. Formed largest component of GUNT coalition army opposed to Habré)
FAT	Chadian Armed Forces (army of central government of Malloum until 1979 when taken over by Colonel Kamougué in the south. Sporadically allied with GUNT forces against Habré)
FCFA	Franc of the African Financial Community (currency pegged to the French franc until 1994 at a rate of FF 1 = FCFA 50. For the purposes of calculations in the text, 300 FCFA can be considered to be roughly the equivalent of 1 US dollar
FDT	Democratic Front of Chad
FFD	Women's Fund for Development
FNUAP	(UNFPA) United Nations Population Fund
FROLINAT	National Liberation Front of Chad (opposition movement created in 1966, operating primarily from the north and east)

GDP	gross domestic product
GIRAF	Women's Informal Research-Action Group
GNP	gross national product
GRET	Research Group on Rural Technologies
GUNT	Transitional Government of National Unity (transitional government under Goukouni Oueddei, 1979-1982)
ICARA II	Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (1984)
ICRC	International Committee for the Red Cross
IIHL	International Institute of Humanitarian Law
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INADES	African Institute for Economic and Social Development
INSE	National Institute of Educational Sciences
INSH	National Institute of Social Sciences (current designation)
INTSH	Chadian National Institute of Social Sciences (former designation)
IPD/PAID	Institut Panafricain pour le Développement/Panafrican Institute for Development
IUED	Graduate Institute of Development Studies
MASPF	Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Advancement
MNRCS	National Movement for Social and Cultural Revolution (new ruling party created by Tombalbaye during the 1973 "Cultural Revolution")
MPC	Ministry of Planning and Co-operation
MRPT	Revolutionary Movement of the Chadian People
MSAPS	Ministry of Food Security and Populations at Risk
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)
MSP	Ministry of Public Health
NGO	non-governmental organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONDR	National Office of Rural Development
ONHPV	National Office for Pastoral and Village Water

	Supply
PNUD	(UNDP) United Nations Development Programme
PPT	Chadian Progressive Party (Tombalbaye's ruling party until 1973)
RDA	African Democratic Assembly
SECADEV	Catholic Aid and Development
SIMAT	Chadian Industrial Company for Agricultural Material
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Dutch Volunteers)
SOTRAHY	Chadian Society for Water Resources and Activities
SPONG	Permanent Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organizations
UJT	Union of Chadian Journalists
UNAD	National Union of Diocesan Associations for Relief and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNIR	National Union for Independence and Revolution (ruling party created by Habré in 1984)
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VITA	Volunteers in Technical Assistance
WFP	World Food Programme

Glossary of special terms and expressions

Aid el-Kabir	Islamic feast day commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac to Allah.
Aouzou Strip	Contested band of territory in the extreme north of Chad under military occupation by Libya since 1973 and formally annexed in 1975. Since the 1987 cease-fire proposed by OAU, Chad and Libya have agreed to submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice for settlement.
azouma	A word of Arabic origin signifying "invitation", this term refers to a system of reciprocal parties held in the homes of individual women to which guests are obliged to contribute gifts. The system enables the host to build up resources for a capital outlay required by a special event.
banco	A mixture of mud and straw traditionally used for the construction of houses.
beignet	A fried doughnut popular among Chadians for breakfast and snacks.
berbéré	A hardy variety of millet used in flood agriculture.
bili-bili	Local alcoholic drink made from fermented sorghum.
boulama	Local village chief.

boule	Dough of ground millet or sorghum that serves as the staple Chadian meal. Served with a sauce of vegetables, meat or fish.
boy	A relic of the colonial period, refers to a domestic worker or household assistant.
codos	The "commandos", southern guerrilla groups nominally united under the leadership of Colonel Alphonse Kotiga and operating in resistance to Habré in the south of Chad between 1983 and 1986.
corde	A plot of land, usually measuring about 0.5 of a hectare.
coupe-coupe	A macheté-like agricultural instrument.
daba	Traditional short-handled hoe.
Derdei	Spiritual leader of the northern Toubou group in Chad.
djougournouma	A series of invitations often organized in bars with the aim of making money. Similar to the *pari-vente* (see below).
événements	The "events": the euphemism commonly used in Chad to evoke the period of civil war and general uprootedness in the early 1980s.
farada	Sudanese currency equivalent to 10 FCFA.
ferik	Arab term denoting a nomadic camp.
goumier	Body guard and/or assistant of local chief.
hectare	A measure of land surface equivalent to approximately 2.5 acres.
karité	Oil producing nut from the "Butyrosperum parkii." tree.
koro	Unit of measure by weight, equal to approximately 2.5 kilograms.
levirate	"Inheritance" of a deceased man's wife by his brother, a custom still practiced in parts of Chad.
Mai Faro	Term used by Chadian villagers to designate refugees returning from the camp at Poli-Faro in Cameroon.
mikhète	Fruit of wild grains found in the Sahelian zone.
naira	Nigerian currency.
niébé	A type of bean ("Dolichos lubia").

ouadi	Humid depressions found throughout the Sahelian zone, conducive to off-season cultivation.
pari-vente	From the French *parier* (to wager) and *vendre* (to sell). Refers to the practice of organizing open invitations in bars during which drinks are sold at a profit to guests. The "wager" is on the extensive "sale" of drinks.
polders	Low lying areas reclaimed from a sea, lake or river by the construction of dikes. Common along the borders of Lake Chad.
pousse-pousse	Hand-operated push cart.
prefect	Official appointed by the central government as territorial administrator in each prefecture.
Ramadan	Islamic holy month of fasting.
rivale	From the French word meaning "rival", refers to a husband's co-wife.
tchaditude	The quality of "authenticity" sought during the Cultural Revolution of Tombalbaye.
tontine	A form of revolving credit union established informally among a group of women — widespread throughout Africa.
yondo	Traditional initiation rites in southern Chad.

Chad in figures*

Area:	1,284,000 kilometres.
Population (1989):	5.4 million (75 per cent rural, 25 per cent urban).
Population growth (1988):	2.4 per cent per year (7 per cent annual urban growth).
Capital:	N'Djaména (10 per cent of total population).
Official languages:	Arabic and French.
National languages:	12 linguistic groups with over 100 dialects.
Climatic zones:	Saharan: 0-200 millimetres of annual rainfall, 45 per cent of surface, 2 per cent of population; Sahelian: 200-500 millimetres of annual rainfall, 45 per cent of surface, 50 per cent of population; Soudanian: 500-1,200 millimetres of annual rainfall; 10 per cent of surface, 48 per cent of population.
Structure of GDP (1987):	43 per cent primary sector (28 per cent agriculture, 12 per cent livestock); 18 per cent secondary sector (16 per cent manufacture); 39 per cent tertiary sector.

Foreign aid (1989):	29 per cent of GDP; US$ 52 per capita.
GNP per capita (1989):	US$ 216.
Average life expectancy (1988):	48 (50 for women, 45 for men).
Infant mortality (1988):	180-200 per 1,000 live births (government figures).
Maternal mortality (1987):	747-1,000 per 100,000 live births.
Average calory intake (1988):	1,733 per day.
Health services (1988):	1 doctor per 38,462 people; 1 medical centre (with beds) per 175,000 people.
Access to clean water (1985):	30 per cent of the urban and 16 per cent of the rural population.
Primary schooling (1988):	37 per cent of school age population (19 per cent of girls).
Illiteracy rates (1985):	75 per cent (60 per cent for men, 89 per cent for women).

*

These figures, referring to conditions in the late 1980s, were drawn from diverse sources including official publications of the government of Chad (Ministries of Public Health, Agriculture and Rural Development, and Planning and Co-operation), the World Bank, UNICEF and UNDP. Given the extreme weakness of data collection in Chad, they should be considered rough estimates.

Chronology of events*

1960	11 August	Independence. François (Ngarta) Tombalbaye, a southerner, elected president of the Republic of Chad.
1962	January	Chad declared a single party state under Tombalbaye's Chadian Progressive Party (PPT).
1963	March	National Assembly dissolved and major purge of political opponents commences.
	September	Riots in Fort-Lamy (N'Djaména) followed by arrests of several northern personalities.
		First wave of refugees
1965	October	Tax revolts in central Chad (Mangalmé) harshly repressed by central government, sparking onset of generalized civil rebellion.
	November	Anti-Tombalbaye plot discovered and instigators arrested.

1966	22 June	Creation of FROLINAT (National Front for the Liberation of Chad) as an opposition movement operating from the Sudan.
	Second wave of refugees	
1968	June-August	Tombalbaye re-elected president. French troops called in to help quell rebellion in the north. Beginning of great Sahelian drought (1968-1974).
1969	April	French military expedition dispatched to Chad along with mission for administrative reform.
	Third wave of refugees	
1971	April	Seventh congress of PPT and major amnesty of political prisoners.
	June	Reduction of French troops.
	August	Failed coup attempt attributed to Libya. Rupture of diplomatic relations with Libya.
1972	April	*Rapprochement* with Libya through Niamey Accord.
	June	Arrests of supporters of FROLINAT after commando raid from Nigeria foiled.
	November-December	Treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance signed with Libya; accompanied by break in diplomatic relations with Israel.
1973	March	Libyan troops occupy Aouzou Strip, with tacit acceptance by Tombalbaye.
	June-August	Drought in the Chadian Sahel reaches its height as famine relief efforts mismanaged.
	Fourth wave of refugees and displaced populations	

	September	"Cultural Revolution" launched by Tombalbaye, with policy of Chadian "authenticity" based on Zairian model. Ruling party (PPT) dissolved and replaced with the National Movement for Social and Cultural Revolution (MNRCS).
1974	April	Capture of three French hostages, including Françoise Claustre, by FROLINAT splinter group headed by Habré in the north.
1975	13 April	Tombalbaye assassinated in military coup d'état.
	12 May	Provisional government formed, with General Felix Malloum as president of the Second Republic of Chad.
1976	May	New Franco-Chadian co-operation agreements signed.
	October	Split within FROLINAT between Habré and Goukouni Oueddei, the latter supported by Libya.
1977	January	Release of Françoise Claustre by Goukouni in Tripoli.
	June	General offensive led by FROLINAT in the north. The French air force called out against the rebels.
		Fifth wave of refugees
1978	February-April	FROLINAT takes Faya-Largeau. French expedition dispatched to halt further advance towards N'Djaména.
	August	Previous negotiations in Khartoum lead to accord between Malloum and Habré and promulgation of a Fundamental Charter. Habré named Prime Minister by President Malloum.

	November	Habré refuses to integrate FAN (Armed Forces of the North) into FAT (official national army) as rift within Malloum's government widens.
1979	February	First civil war. Outbreak of fighting between Habré and Malloum in N'Djaména, with Goukouni's troops (FAP) entering from the north. Southerners leave the capital en masse for the south. Tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims intensify as execution of southern administrators in the east is met by reprisal massacres of Muslims in the south. *De facto* division of the Chadian state.
	March-April	Kano Accords I and II. Provisional state council established under Goukouni. Resignations of Malloum and Habré. Formation of Government of the National Union of Chad (GUNT) under President Goukouni refused recognition by the south.
	Sixth wave of refugees	
	August-November	Lagos Accords and formation of second GUNT. Habré named Minister of Defence under President Goukouni. Southern administrators again refuse to rejoin the capital.
1980	March	Second civil war. Skirmishes between supporters of Habré and Goukouni in N'Djaména escalate into outright war lasting nine months.
	Seventh wave of refugees	
	April-June	Dismissal of Habré as Minister of

		Defense. Evacuation of French troops and treaty of co-operation between Libya and Goukouni.
	October-December	Intervention of Libya against FAN. Recapture of BET by Libya and entry of Libyan troops into N'Djaména on the side of Goukouni. Habré regroups his forces in the east.
1981	January	Chad-Libya merger announced in Treaty of Friendship, and alliance between Goukouni and Qaddafi brings condemnation from France and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and American support for Habré.
	May-July	Libyan withdrawal from N'Djaména. OAU reiterates support for GUNT. Announcement of general disarmament of factions in N'Djaména and first general amnesty. Creation of the National Committee for the Reception of Refugees (CNAR).
		First massive returns of refugees
	October-December	General withdrawal of Libyans at request of GUNT. Arrival of the inter-African force of the OAU. Meeting in Paris to plan assistance to Chad.
1982	January-May	Habré's units advance in the north and east.
	7 June	Habré's Armed Forces of the North (FAN) seize N'Djaména after sharp fighting on the outskirts. Goukouni flees to BET. Withdrawal of inter-African force.
		Eighth wave of refugees

	August-September	Southern cities of Sarh and Moundou fall to dissident FAT troops allied to Habré as Colonel Kamougué flees.
	September-October	Promulgation of Fundamental Act. Habré sworn in as president of the Third Republic. Formation of widely representative government.
		Second wave of returns
	November	First International Conference on Assistance to Chad held in Geneva, attended by predominantly Western donors.
1983	January	Creation of unified National Armed Forces of Chad (FANT) as army of the central government.
	May	Libyan-backed counter-offensive by Goukouni Oueddei commences in the northern region (BET).
	June	Recognition of Habré's government by OAU. Second general amnesty.
		Third wave of returns
	June-August	Battle of Faya-Largeau between Habré and Goukouni. Operation "Manta" launched by France in support of Habré.
	September	Operations against populations of southern Chad by FANT troops in military occupation spawn birth of southern resistance movements (*codos*) from bases in the Central African Republic.
1984	June	Dissolution of the Command Council of the Armed Forces of the North (CCFAN) and creation of the National Union for Independence and Revolution (UNIR) as the ruling party.

	August	Renewed fighting engulfs southern Chad. Brutal government repression of *codos* and civilian populations.
		Ninth wave of refugees
1985	September	Famine conditions caused by drought since 1983 add internally displaced populations to refugee flows as emergency assistance programmes get under way. Breech by Libya of Franco-Libyan accords for simultaneous withdrawal of troops from Chad. Second International Conference for the Economic Development of Chad held in Geneva to garner support for the 1986-1988 Interim Development Plan.
	November	Accords between the opposition movement CAC/CDR and Habré in Libreville. Third general amnesty.
		Fourth wave of returns
1986	February	Accords between *codos* (southern guerrillas) and Habré.
		Fifth wave of returns
1987	January-March	Drop in world market prices for cotton has dramatic effects on the Chadian economy. Institution of emergency restructuring programme. Libyan offensive in north leads to French deployment of Operation Epervier and US military aid to Habré. Chadian National Armed Forces (FANT) force Libyan retreat from areas occupied in the north (BET).

		Colonel Kamougué (formerly leader of Permanent Committee of South, vice-president of GUNT and Goukouni ally against Habré) rallies to the régime.
	August-September	Chadian attack on Libyan troops in Aouzou Strip repelled and cease-fire brokered by OAU.
1988	October	Chad and Libya agree to seek peaceful resolution of territorial dispute and renew diplomatic relations.
	November	Second congress of UNIR in N'Djaména. Habré's policy of national reconciliation rallies former opposition leaders to the régime. Accords in Baghdad with CDR.
		Sixth wave of returns
1989		Accords with the first army of CAC.
		Seventh wave of returns
	April	Failed attempt at coup-d'état by high-ranking government officials, members of a rival northern ethnic group. Creation of new opposition group under Idriss Deby operating along eastern border with the Sudan.
	September	Explosion of commercial airliner on flight from N'Djaména, killing several prominent Chadian personalities and wife of American ambassador.
	December	Promulgation of a new constitution and re-election by "popular" referendum of Habré as president for another seven years.
1990	July	Elections to 123-member national assembly.

	December	Successful coup d'état by Colonel Idriss Deby leads to flight of Habré.
	Tenth wave of refugees	
1991		Stabilization of political power.
	Eighth wave of returns	
1993		National conference in N'Djaména.

* Chronology compiled from M'Bokolo, 1985; Decalo, 1987; Collelo, 1990; Lanne, 1991; and INSH, 1991.

1 INTRODUCTION

REFUGEES AND UPROOTEDNESS

African aspects

The number of refugees worldwide is estimated by United Nations sources to have reached between 19 and 20 million people, with an additional 25 million estimated to be among the internally displaced (Boutros-Ghali, 1993:173; Ogata, 1994:1). African countries have generated a significant proportion of the world's refugee flows and millions of African people are among the internally displaced. The root causes of the situation in most African contexts are not hard to discern, but durable solutions have remained elusive. Political instability, economic underdevelopment and internal social conflict combined with external aggression join forces with recurring natural disasters to contribute to the problem. Entire communities have been uprooted by conditions of prevailing insecurity caused by war and civil strife, aggravated in many instances by drought. Together these forces have led to conditions of famine, death and destruction. For those crossing international borders to become refugees, the perils and hardship of flight are followed by the experience of exile, which may either involve long periods of adaptation to life in a refugee camp or create other challenges

encountered in attempts to survive on their own, outside of formal structures of assistance. In the case of internally displaced populations, some relief aid may be provided in the form of emergency feeding programmes and efforts may be extended to assist resettlement in more favourable locations; but, given the prevailing weaknesses of most national infrastructures in African countries, many such populations may be left largely on their own and obliged to fend for themselves.

Mass refugee returns

One particular aspect of refugee flows within the developing world that has been relatively understudied and has therefore remained poorly understood is the social and economic situation of refugees who have voluntarily returned to their countries of origin (see, for example, Coles, 1985). A selective bibliographical survey of mass voluntary repatriation of refugees in developing countries uncovered a number of documents on the topic, but found the coverage uneven (Crisp, 1987). According to the survey, while the bulk of literature on voluntary repatriation in developing countries examines refugee situations in Africa, the coverage of different African countries remains spotty. Repatriation to Ethiopia has generated the most literature, followed by studies of the Sudan and Uganda. Other African case studies (for example, Angola, Chad, Rwanda and Zimbabwe) have been much less well documented. Furthermore, "there is almost no general examination of the role of assistance programmes in voluntary repatriation" (Crisp, 1987:iii). As the survey indicates, "an enormous amount of research remains to be done on the subject of voluntary repatriation to developing countries", with a particular need for additional case studies conducted in a dispassionate manner and based on systematic, interdisciplinary approaches (Crisp, 1987:vii-viii).

The information to be obtained from such studies is especially vital for national and international decision makers and planners to take into account in developing programmes to meet the needs of both the returning refugees and the local populations in the major areas of returnee influxes. There has been growing international awareness that refugees' needs for assistance do

not suddenly stop once the home country has been regained, and that poor countries are ill-equipped to deal with the shock of mass returns and with the destabilizing social, economic, political and ecological consequences such returns can have in regions that may already be weakened by years of war, drought and limited infrastructural investment. There has thus been increasing acceptance of the fact that responsibility for providing assistance to refugees cannot be limited to relief programmes in the country of exile, but must be linked to appropriate relief and development efforts in the countries of return (Morsink, 1989).

In this regard, figuring prominently among the conclusions of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II) was the recommendation that returnees benefit from continued assistance once back in their countries of origin. This is to ensure that populations returning to their home countries do not shed their sad identity as "refugees" in foreign lands merely to assume the equally problematic identity of "displaced populations" uprooted within their own lands and aggravating the problems of underdevelopment therein. A formal agreement signed in 1987 between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) explicitly recognized the need for co-operation in programmes oriented towards relief and development (Morsink, 1989). In order to do so, both the situation of returnees and the impact of their return on local populations need to be understood in greater depth in each specific instance.

The situation of women

Another significant research gap remains with regard to women refugees and returnees. It is estimated that women and children make up around 80 per cent of the world's refugee and displaced populations (Forbes Martin, 1992:1). Yet, as observed by Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "relatively little has been documented on the specific issues facing women returning to their homes after years of exile" (in preface to Forbes Martin, 1992:viii). "The cycle of hopelessness created by an impoverished mother raising a family on her own

must be addressed as an issue of highest priority in refugee situations, if we are to create conditions favourable to future self reliance" (Forbes Martin, 1992). Ann Brazeau, Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Women at UNHCR, also underlines the fact that "refugee women face particular hardships at all stages in flight, up to the eventual resolution of their situation. A knowledge of these factors will assist refugee workers in planning activities which may alleviate some of the difficulties" (in introduction to Forbes Martin, 1992:ix).

Women in many developing countries, and particularly in Africa, play a critical role in the economy and are the primary caregivers within the family, responsible for the daily maintenance and upkeep of the household. In the refugee setting and its aftermath, such traditional activities may be accentuated and new roles added as women take on heightened responsibility for the survival of the household. In many instances, male family members may be absent and traditional support structures may have broken down, leaving the woman, perhaps physically exhausted and traumatized by social upheaval, as the sole supporter of her family. Thus, as underlined by Brazeau, "if the family is to survive and begin to prepare for a self-reliant future it is obvious that assistance activities must be targeted to this most stressed proportion of the population" (in introduction to Forbes Martin, 1992:ix). In numerous instances the world over, refugee women have displayed immense courage, resilience and inventiveness in adapting to situations of dramatic social change so as to ensure the survival of their families. They have, in turn, become significant forces for change on return to their home countries: "In a sense then, such women are both agents of change and sources of continuity and tradition" (Forbes Martin, 1992:7). These processes need to be documented and individual cases compared to provide data for programmes aiming to support such dynamism on the part of refugee women.

The importance of focusing attention on the special situation of women refugees and returnees is increasingly being recognized within the international community. The special needs of refugee and displaced women were highlighted at the Mid-Decade Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen in 1980; the programme of action for the second

half of the decade called for assistance and counselling to women refugees. The End-of-Decade Conference in Nairobi in 1985 also served as impetus for further action, with special reference to refugee women included in the Forward Looking Strategies put forward by the participants (paragraphs 298 and 299, cited in Forbes Martin, 1992:95). Since 1985, UNHCR has adopted general conclusions relating specifically to refugee women. In 1988, it established a steering committee on refugee women, set out internal guidelines on international protection issues for refugee women and created the post of Senior Co-Ordinator for Refugee Women, with a training module developed to enhance staff sensitivity to gender issues. Its policy is now to include consideration of the special needs and resources of refugee women in all aspects of UNHCR's protection and assistance activities, calling, among other things, for more data on refugee women as a basis for better programming (Forbes Martin, 1992:96). An international NGO, Working Group on Refugee Women, exists to focus attention on the issue and national groups and committees have formed to promote policies in individual countries (Forbes Martin, 1992:6). To be effective, such mobilization needs to be combined with concern for the special needs of women.

THE CASE STUDY OF CHAD

The Chadian context

Because of the importance of refugee movements to and from Chad in recent years and in view of the scarcity of documentation of these movements, Chad was selected by UNRISD as one of three African countries for a comparative case study. The post-colonial history of Chad has been scarred by ongoing political conflict and civil unrest periodically bursting forth into outright civil war and aggravated by external aggression from Libya to the north, with conditions of particular violence experienced since the late 1970s (see "Chronology of Events", above). Characterized as an *état néant* between 1979 and 1982, when the Chadian state dissolved into rival factions jockeying for power, its populations

have been uprooted by incessant conflict as many were forced to flee in search of refuge in neighbouring countries. Merging into and intensifying the dislocation of populations have been the tremendous social upheavals caused by drought and famine. The two most recent cases (1971-1974 and 1983-1985) cut a swathe of destruction throughout the Sahelian zone and, in combination with general conditions of insecurity in the countryside, generated untold numbers of internal displacements within the country. In such a context, distinctions between refugees and the internally displaced become purely academic; the emergency relief programmes established during this period involved both groups, as did the development programmes that followed in their wake. Yet there was little attempt to document the processes involved in establishing such programmes or in assessing their impact on the ground. As so often in emergency situations, the urgent need for action seemed to take precedence over concern for the careful collection, monitoring and analysis of information.

Research organization and methodology

In order to fill such information gaps, a case study of these events in Chad was conducted by a team of researchers from the National Institute of Social Sciences (INSH) based in N'Djaména. Guidance for the overall framework of the study as well as financial assistance was provided by UNRISD. Methodological assistance was provided by the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED) in Geneva. Precise terms for collaboration among the three partners were set out in 1989 (INSH/UNRISD/IUED, 1989). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided support for a parallel investigation led by a female researcher hired especially to look into the specific situation of women and children refugees and returnees (INSH/UNICEF, 1990). (For a complete list of project members and associates, see acknowledgements, above.)

As the first step towards the launching of field research, an overview of research themes was set out by UNRISD as a framework for the investigations to come (Morsink, 1989). Thereafter, a national workshop on the theme "The return of Chadian refugees and strategies for their installation in their

regions of origin" was organized by INSH, UNRISD and IUED at INSH in N'Djaména from 12 to 13 January 1990. This was the first workshop to be held at the institute since the civil war in Chad and as such marked the beginning of a new era of research in the country. The significance of the event was highlighted in opening speeches by the INSH Director and the Minister of the newly created Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The workshop was organized around a series of presentations by some of the principal actors in refugee affairs on the national scene followed by discussion sessions in two commissions. Participants included political authorities, researchers, representatives of non-governmental organizations and international agencies and at least one refugee. UNRISD outlined its refugee returnee research programme for the participants and presented its overview of research themes for the Chadian investigation (Morsink, 1990a and 1990b). The workshop generated much useful information on the activities of some of the major actors in refugee affairs in Chad, stimulated interesting debates among the participants, helped identify and focus attention on certain key themes to be explored and generally provoked great interest in the topic of research to be undertaken (INSH, 1990).

Research was to focus on the period between 1979 and 1990. Key questions to be addressed by the research team included the following: Which regions and populations in Chad were most affected by the traumatic events in the country's recent history and what was the nature and magnitude of the subsequent refugee flows? What experiences were accumulated by the refugees in exile that might have helped or hindered their eventual reintegration into their home regions in Chad? What of refugees spontaneously settled in countries of asylum without the benefit of formal programmes of assistance? What strategies were they able to adopt in adapting to situations of traumatic change and what were their relations with local populations in the countries of refuge? What contributed to the refugees' decisions to return? What obstacles did they encounter along the way and how were these overcome? What national and international policies and programmes were developed to guide efforts aimed at facilitating their repatriation and reintegration into their home

regions? How successful were these programmes at the national and local levels and how did they fit into overall relief and development efforts in Chad, including those designed to meet the needs of internally displaced populations? What were the effects on local populations of massive returns of refugees and displaced persons and what was the nature of social relations established between the different groups? Did socio-cultural ties of co-operation and/or kinship reassert themselves to aid in the process of reintegration, or was the tissue of social relations irreparably rent by the dislocations of the past? How did returning refugees contribute to development activities in the different regions of return?

For the specific research component on women, investigations were to focus on the following questions: Throughout the experience of flight, exile and return, what particular challenges and hardships did women encounter and how did they surmount them? What kinds of strategies did they adopt to ensure their own survival and that of their children in situations of intensive social dislocation in which customary support systems had often broken down? Did the refugee experience induce permanent changes or transformations in gender relations and in the roles and responsibilities of women? What were the effects of such transformations on social relations, productive activities and the overall status of women during processes of reintegration in Chad? Were female refugee returnees, by dint of the experiences they had accumulated in exile, able to serve as a dynamic force in the local societies to which they returned? Finally, what lessons can be drawn from the overall refugee experience in Chad?

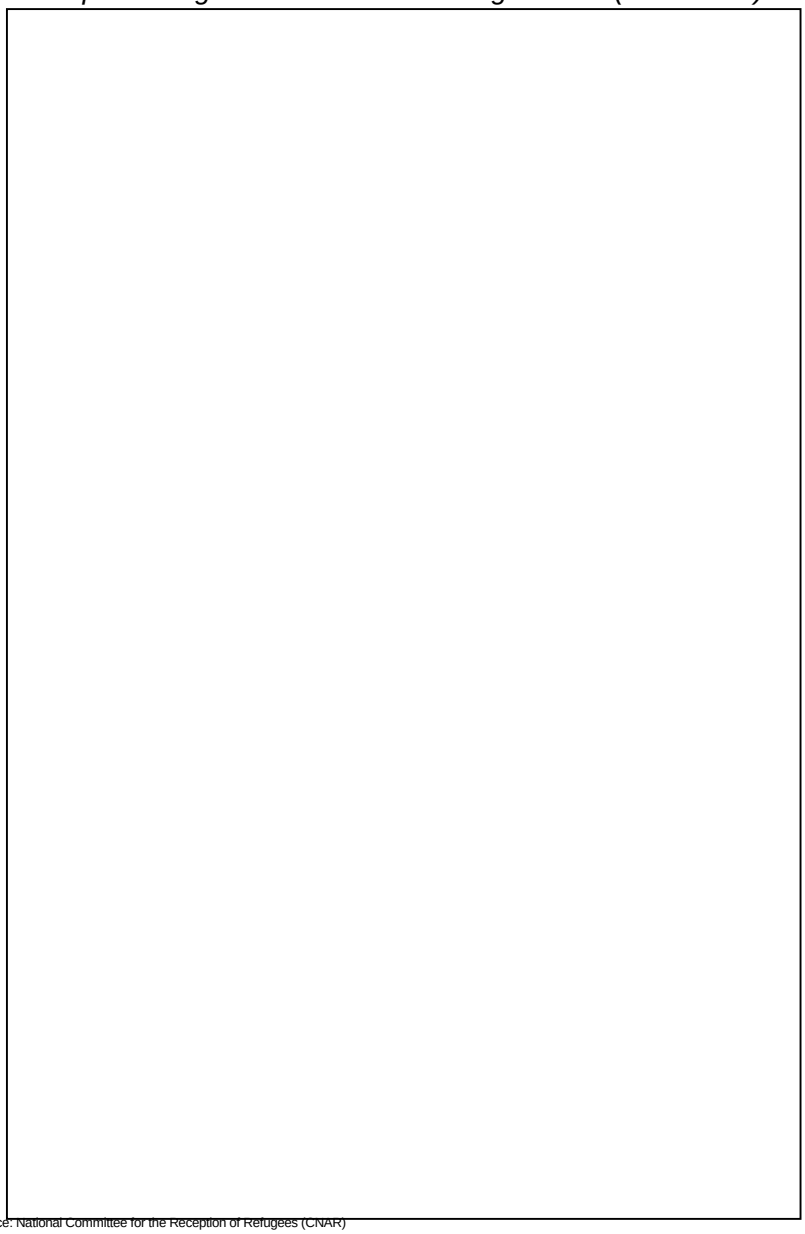
The original research design included several phases. The first phase, from November 1989 to March 1990, took place primarily in N'Djaména and focused on gathering data on national and international policies and programmes for refugees and returnees. This phase included preliminary identification of actors and organizations; collection and consultation of documentary resources pertaining to policies and programmes for refugees and returnees in Chad; consolidation and extension of information gathered through the holding of the national workshop; and preparation for field research through

determination of research sites and methodologies and development of research instruments. Field investigations for this phase of research in N'Djaména were conducted by the team of researchers from INSH on the basis of structured and semi-structured interviews with key personnel of national and international organizations and the NGO community in order to gather more precise information on specific policies and programmes concerning refugees and returnees. A separate interview guide was elaborated for questions pertaining specifically to women and children refugees and returnees and was administered by the one female researcher hired for the purpose who was henceforth to be integrated into the INSH team. The information gathered through such interviews was then synthesized and the ground prepared for the next phase of field research.

The second phase of field research was initially to cover the four regions of Chad that were determined to have received the greatest influxes of returning refugees (see map 2). These included the prefectures of Kanem and Chari-Baguirmi, particularly the capital area and the region of Karal to the north, which were designated as Zone A; the southern region comprising the prefectures of Moyen-Chari, Logone-Oriental and Logone-Occidental as Zone B; the western region of Ouaddaï and Biltine as Zone C; and the northern region of Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti (BET) as Zone D. Logistical difficulties and financial limitations led to the elimination of the northern zone (D) and of the prefecture of Kanem in Zone A, thus enabling the team to concentrate more fully on the other regions of influx. One researcher was designated to lead the field investigation in each zone and the whole was co-ordinated from N'Djaména by the chief researcher at INSH. Preliminary site visits were planned in the central areas of each region in order to test the research instruments and determine which locations of resettlement of refugees in the rural areas should be included in subsequent field investigations. However, since multiple trips to the field proved difficult, these were combined into one period of field research which lasted for two full months between July and September 1990.

Regional workshops were organized in each zone in order to gather information on the influxes of refugees in the area, determine sample sizes, test working hypotheses and modify research instruments. The workshops were also an important means of involving regional authorities and other key local actors in the

Map 2 — Regional distribution of refugee flows (1979-1984)



Source: National Committee for the Reception of Refugees (CNAR)

research project and securing their support for the investigation. So, too, the presence of returned refugees at some of these workshops helped pave the way for closer relations between the researchers and the subjects of research. After the workshops, four research assistants (two male and two female) were selected from each region and trained for four days in research techniques by the INSH team member assigned to that region. Criteria for the selection of research assistants included a good knowledge of French and local languages and credibility vis-à-vis the local populations. Research assistants were responsible for administering the questionnaires developed by the team for the refugee returnees (male and female). When localities outside the particular home areas of the local researchers were approached, village chiefs were called upon for help in assembling the populations for individual and collective interviews (Passang et al., 1992:17-19).

The initial scope of research and the sample size for the population to be covered were decided based on data furnished by the National Committee for the Reception of Refugees (CNAR), which provided the figure of 311,363 for the total number of refugees repatriated to Chad as of July 1990. Since, in accordance with UNHCR's figure for the distribution of foodstuffs, the reference unit used by CNAR was based on six people per family (defined as a unit of consumption), the INSH research team calculated the number of returned refugee families or households in all four of the major zones of return to be 51,894 (311,363/6) (Passang et al., 1992:17). The INSH field investigations aimed at an original sample size of 1,200 households (later revised to 1,100), which the team believed to be representative of the whole. These were chosen in proportion to the total number of returnees in each of the zones selected for study, with both male and female heads of household to be included in the investigations (Passang et al., 1992:18).

The method of investigation included open discussions, both individual and collective; semi-structured interviews; and structured interviews by means of a questionnaire. In cases where application of the questionnaire was deemed difficult due to the dispersion of the population and the time limits of the study, the techniques of open discussions and semi-directive interviews

were employed, primarily with individuals who had received assistance while in exile and on their return to Chad. In addition, 15 individual case studies were conducted and tape recorded in each zone. The case studies included members of the poor, salaried workers, entrepreneurs, traders, those engaged in petty trade and service in the informal sector, and farmers (Passang et al., 1992:17-19). Another 50 case studies were compiled specifically on women returnees, with 15 of them focusing on women who — through the death, desertion or divorce of their husbands — were forced to face some part of the refugee period alone, with sole responsibility for their children. In the course of the investigation of women, the original questionnaire that had been developed proved too rigid for application in the field, most likely because the questions posed were not all relevant to the specific experiences of women. Moreover, the use of such formal instruments does not always allow women's own voices to be heard. The questionnaire was subsequently abandoned in favour of a simpler question guide which proved more supple and allowed a richer harvest of women's perspectives. Information on the situation of women returnees is thus more qualitative than quantitative, based on a modified life-history approach garnering personal accounts of experiences before, during and after exile (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:16).

The results of the field investigations were compiled by the INSH team in various draft reports, culminating in two final reports submitted to UNRISD in 1993. One report deals with the overall situation of refugee returnees (Passang et al., 1992), while the other presents the findings of the specific project component on women and children returnees (Nodjal and Passang, 1992). The principal research findings were presented at an international symposium organized by UNRISD in N'Djaména in February 1992 on the theme of "The social and economic aspects of mass voluntary return movements of refugees from one African country to another". The N'Djaména symposium drew together 50 participants including members of the INSH research team and associates; governmental and non-governmental policy makers in Chad; representatives from UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNRISD; and administrators and practitioners from Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Rwanda and

the Sudan. Brief reports on the refugee experiences in these different African countries provided a comparative perspective on the problems involved. The working groups of the symposium also generated extensive discussion of practical issues affecting preparations for the mass voluntary return of refugees in the context of local, regional and national development, and a number of recommendations for action were produced.

A national panel for the review of the findings of the research in Chad was proposed and a calendar of work was sketched out for the INSH team to ready their reports for publication. Unfortunately, ongoing insecurity in the country, deteriorating conditions of work for civil servants and university researchers, a shift in priorities at INSH and a withdrawal of external funds for technical support rendered further work on the documents difficult in the country. It was therefore decided to call on outside support for final publication.

Limitations of the study and difficulties encountered

The quality of investigations into matters of policy formation and particular programmes developed in the past depends on adequate sources of information in the form of documents or of informants directly involved in actions at the time. The emergency period in Chad's recent history led to numerous interventions by a multitude of institutional actors, many of whose field representatives, especially among the international personnel, are no longer in the country or in the neighbouring countries where refugee camps were established. Furthermore, field offices may not keep complete archives with documents pertaining to past interventions, as these may more likely have been transferred to their institutional headquarters. A thorough assessment of all programmes of assistance developed for Chadian refugees in neighbouring countries and for their resettlement in Chad would require a significant amount of research in such archives and contact with former field staff of the different agencies involved. As this was not possible for the INSH team, there may be certain gaps in the depiction, analysis and interpretation of events. This is especially critical for the account of experiences of Chadian refugees in exile, which is based

almost exclusively on the testimonies of a limited number of refugees, with little consistent documentation from programme documents or interviews with agency sources.

The overall study could have benefited from a stronger comparative perspective. Due to the weaknesses of research structures in Chad and the relative isolation of the INSH team, which had limited access to documentation on other refugee experiences, comparative research sources have not been drawn on as fully as possible. Empirical research (in French) on refugees in the francophone world is in any case more limited than research (in English) on the anglophone world, thus compounding the French-speaking team's difficulty of access to comparative studies. To a certain extent, this clouds the view of what may be unique about the Chadian situation as opposed to what it may share with other countries marked by similar situations. Another limitation arises from the lack of specific baseline data on Chadian social dynamics, gender relations and modes of production prior to the refugee experience in the regions of refugee returns. This hampers the ability to document change, with interpretation of the transformations wrought by the social dislocations of the period under study deriving mainly from general knowledge and observations and the "before and after" accounts of the refugees themselves. A further weakness in comparative perspective lies in the failure to use systematic interviews in the regions of return with local populations that had not fled their homes as a counterpoint to interviews with the refugee returnees. This would have helped to contextualize the returnees' accounts of the ease or difficulty of resettlement and would have provided valuable details on the effects of the events provoking flight by some on the lives and livelihoods of those who remained behind.

The INSH team concluded that the reduction of field research to two months gave insufficient time for a thorough investigation of the conditions of returned refugees in the different regions of the country. Logistics in Chad are notoriously difficult and the fact that the study was led during the two months of the heaviest annual rains rendered access to the most remote areas still more problematic. The combination of logistical constraints and financial limitations led to a cutting back of the regional scope of

the original investigation, which cannot therefore be said to have uncovered findings representative of Chad as a whole. There remained a certain imbalance in the regions covered and at times the researchers were forced to remain at the surface level of problems recounted by refugee returnees, without being able to penetrate to deeper levels of analysis. In some areas where village chiefs intervened to assemble villagers for questioning, the team noted a certain homogeneity in the responses registered, leaving the credibility of such responses open to question. In other areas, effective communication was hampered because the research team was obliged to rely on translations supplied by the locally recruited research assistants, leading to a certain loss in precision and texture of question and answer. It was further noted that many of the local populations involved in the study perceived the members of the research team to be representatives of aid organizations or agents of the central administration who had come to inventory local needs prior to extending assistance, leading to a tendency to tailor responses to suit the occasion (Passang et al., 1992:19).

The choice of the rainy season as the period for the field investigations was a conscious one, as the team deemed it more likely to find peasants in their home localities engaged in agricultural activities at this time. However, while this was certainly true, the pressure of agriculture work often understandably limited the availability of the population for questioning. This was found to be especially true for the women's component, as Chadian women are heavily engaged in agricultural work in addition to their daily labour within the household. The woman researcher sometimes found herself trying to conduct interviews in the middle of a field where a woman was trying to plant her crops, or alternatively waiting until late at night after the woman had returned from the fields and had finished her household chores to turn, exhausted, to the questions being posed by the impertinent outsider (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:17).

The difficulties that arose in relation to the women's component deserve special mention, for they have much in common with other efforts to stimulate research on women. In the first place, during the initial phase of investigation among

representatives of national and international agencies in the capital, which was designed to determine the nature of policies and programmes in favour of refugee returnees, a degree of resistance was encountered to questions pertaining specifically to policies related to women. The female researcher felt that many of her informants at this level — almost all of whom were male — did not take the topic of women seriously and frequently replied to her questions with jokes or slighting comments. This was a cause of discouragement for the researcher who initially felt personally belittled in her quest. Later analysis, however, led her to the conclusion that such behaviour might be illustrative of prevailing attitudes, which translate into actions that marginalize women's concerns in matters of policy-making and programming (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:18-19).

Other problems arose during the second phase of investigation among the women returnees in the field. The researcher had found very little comparative literature and few exemplary models to draw on in the design of this research project and had little grounding in either research methodology or feminist theory as this pertains to research on women. The general questionnaire, which proved inappropriate for the women's interviews, was abandoned in favour of a more supple interview guide. However, certain questions proved too personal in nature to allow for frank responses. Often, for example, the women informants would refuse to speak openly of marital problems arising from the refugee situation, as such a topic was understandably considered too intimate and is not habitually discussed in public in Chad. For the same reason, problems of sexual violence perpetrated against women in the course of their refugee experience were barely evoked. The time necessary to establish relationships of confidence in order to overcome such natural reticence was not always adequate. Moreover, it was not always possible to interview the women separately. As women are customarily inhibited about speaking openly in the presence of menfolk and as various male members of the family or neighbourhood would frequently insist on being present during the discussions, there was often a limit to the depth of responses that could be gathered (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:19).

At the time of the study, there were no female researchers employed as permanent staff at INSH. The willingness to take on and supervise the work of an inexperienced female researcher employed especially for the purpose of the study was a testimony to that institute's openness to explore research themes involving women. In the gender-segregated context of much of Chadian society, such themes could be addressed only by a woman. While some problems arose in ensuring adequate co-ordination in the work of the two teams and in integrating the findings of the women's component into the main body of the report, these were gradually overcome as the value of the investigation of women returnees was more fully internalized by the research team and it is to be hoped that the experiences thus acquired may set a precedent for future studies. For the fact remains that a single female researcher, charged with covering all three zones of the study, was successfully able to produce innovative results in a virtually untouched domain.

This last comment may be extended to the study as a whole. The university system and research structures in Chad have been severely weakened and disrupted as a consequence of the years of civil disturbance marking the country's recent history. The present investigation was the first to be conducted by INSH researchers since 1975 and as such represents a major step forward. The fact that research of such scope on such a sensitive topic was carried out at all is a remarkable achievement and owes much to the dedication and enthusiasm of the entire INSH staff and research associates as well as to the high quality of support for research offered by IUED through successive visits to Chad by the consultant engaged for the purpose. The project as a whole provided valuable training in research methodology and procedures and contributed to the development of an experienced core of local researchers at INSH. The acknowledged limitations of the study can, in fact, be attributed in large part to the two conflicting aims of the project which sought, through support for an inexperienced research team, to rebuild the research capacity of an institute paralysed by years of war while at the same time producing academically acceptable research results that would be publishable at the international level. In both respects, the Chadian study proved more difficult

than the parallel studies carried out in Uganda and Zimbabwe, where research structures were more developed. From this perspective, the very real positive accomplishments of the Chadian field investigations are all the more valuable.

The findings of the INSH study highlight the numerous problems encountered by refugees in flight and exile, and on their return to Chad; offer useful insights into the ingenious strategies they adopt to overcome such problems; and provide valuable assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of various assistance programmes. They also shed light on a little-known period in Chad's troubled past and document the dynamics of historical processes as they are lived in the present by individual Chadians struggling for their own survival and well-being as well as those of their families. The case studies of Chadian women refugees provide particular insights into the gendered nature of the refugee experience which have important implications for policies seeking to support both male and female refugees and returnees.

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION

Compilation of sources

The reports produced by the INSH team, project documents and commentaries from UNRISD, and other reports and outside literature available to the team provide the basis for the present publication which aims to present a synthetic view of the research findings, highlighting in particular the case of women returnees. The author of the present monograph is an anthropologist and former UNICEF staff member working in Chad from 1986 to 1990. She was responsible for the initiation and co-ordination of UNICEF's support for the women's research component at the time of the INSH investigation, but was not directly involved in the field research itself. She could not, therefore, independently verify all of the findings of the research team. Though clarification was lacking on certain points, an attempt has been made to eliminate certain inconsistencies appearing in the original texts and to interpret the information presented in the two INSH reports as

accurately as possible. Limitations deriving from the failure to situate the Chadian case within the wider refugee literature are not addressed in the scope of this monograph. However, when appropriate, as in describing general social conditions in Chad, analysing social development programmes and depicting the position of women within the diverse Chadian populations, supplementary information gathered in the course of the author's previous work with UNICEF has been included to give context to the team's findings on the emergency period and refugee experience. Such information is drawn from a draft version of UNICEF's situation analysis of women and children in Chad for which the author was responsible (UNICEF, 1990), as well as from the author's dissertation on Chadian women and development (Watson, 1994).

Outline of chapters

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study, setting the refugee problem in Chad within the overall context of refugees worldwide and pointing to gaps in institutional understandings of processes of mass refugee returns and the specific problems encountered by women refugees and returnees. It then establishes the scope, procedures and institutional setting for the research project and outlines the structure of presentation for the present monograph.

Chapter 2 presents the general setting in Chad. Different regional characteristics and modes of livelihood practiced by the country's various populations are depicted, conditions of underdevelopment are described and national political processes and development efforts are analysed. The focus then turns to the dramatic events of the late 1970s and 1980s that led to massive flows of refugees and provoked extensive internal displacements of populations uprooted by drought, famine and prevailing conditions of insecurity.

Chapter 3 analyses the refugee experience itself, drawing on accounts given by Chadian refugees supplemented with information from other sources to shed light on problems encountered during flight from Chad and on conditions of life

during the period of exile in the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and the Sudan. Distinctions are drawn between refugees who received some form of assistance in the countries of exile and those who settled spontaneously among local populations, with accompanying analysis of the different challenges of survival and strategies of response provided for each case. Differences in assistance offered in the principal countries of asylum are also examined for a comparative perspective of the impact of policies on people. A particular focus on refugee women highlights the specific problems women encountered in exile, the tremendous resiliency displayed in adapting to situations of traumatic change and the transformations brought about through upheavals affecting the very tissue of social relations.

Chapter 4 examines processes involved and problems encountered in the return to Chad of different refugee groups. As national processes of political reconciliation coupled with the rehabilitation of basic infrastructures were set in motion to provide the necessary preconditions for return, factors entering into the decision to return on the part of the refugees are identified and institutional procedures for formal repatriation are described. A special case study of repatriation from Nigeria in 1990 provides an eyewitness account of the processes involved.

Chapter 5 focuses on the complex social issues surrounding the resettlement and reintegration of refugee populations in Chad, with analysis of the multitude of problems encountered and the means by which they were overcome, through organized programmes of assistance and the spontaneous efforts of the refugees themselves in interaction with local populations. Relations between refugees and local groups are examined in the different regional contexts, as is the impact on both of programmes of assistance set within the context of overall relief and development efforts in Chad. Again, a special focus on the experiences of women returnees is provided, with analysis of the extent to which national and international policies and programmes have both responded to their needs and built upon their resources for development. The chapter ends with observations on the transformative impact on local social

structures and processes of returning refugee populations, with particular reference to women returnees as agents of change.

Chapter 6 offers conclusions of a general nature on the experiences of exile and return, the impact of aid programmes and the lessons that may be drawn for the future from the Chadian situation.

An annex presents the personal testimonies of 15 women who faced some phase of the refugee situation alone and who recount in their own words their experiences before flight, while in exile and after their return to Chad. These individual case studies document both the intense pain and peril suffered as a result of uprootedness and the consequent disruption of family ties, as well as the amazing courage and strength displayed by women in the struggle for their own survival and the survival of their children.

Major findings and policy implications

Analysis of the root causes of refugee flows and population displacements in Chad highlighted the combined effects of political turmoil, environmental collapse and economic insecurity. While certain distinctions in experience exist, policies built on an artificial differentiation between "refugees", "economic migrants" and victims of famine and drought may fail to respond to the total nexus of circumstances that provoke massive displacements of population and contribute to a general situation of uprootedness. A large number of Chadians who fled their country were never officially inscribed on the lists of "refugees" and did not, therefore, benefit from official structures of assistance while in exile. So, too, many Chadians who were internally displaced or had remained in their homes suffered losses as devastating as those affecting refugee populations. Relief and development projects in the regions of return must therefore take into account the needs of both the refugee returnees and the internally displaced, as well as of those who stayed behind, with programmes designed to pave the way from "relief" to "development" and to respond to the basic problems of underdevelopment affecting all populations.

The most visible dislocation produced by the refugee experience and the wider phenomenon of uprootedness may be seen in the disrupted spatial distribution of populations forced to flee their habitual homes. But policies designed to assist such populations must also take into consideration the more profound social dislocations that may have rent the very fabric of society, changing the rules of interaction and perhaps leaving some members particularly vulnerable. In Chad, this was found to be the case for many women refugees who, as widows, abandoned wives or otherwise single heads of household, found themselves without the protection and support of traditional family structures as they attempted to fend for themselves and their children. At the same time, the breakdown of traditional restraints and taboos during successive periods of crisis in Chad was seen to open up new opportunities for women that could be seized upon as openings for positive change. In either case, programmes of assistance for both refugees and returnees must be designed in a way that is sensitive to the transformation of gender relations so as to respond more adequately to the changed roles, statuses and social situations of women.

The most effective programmes of assistance for refugees in countries of exile were those that sought both to respond to the immediate survival needs of the refugees and to bolster their longer term economic potential and decision-making capacity. In the example of camps in Cameroon, the refugees were introduced to new productive technologies and allowed a degree of participation in running the affairs of the camp. This was favourably compared to the situation in certain camps in the Central African Republic that were found to foster a spirit of dependency among the refugees, as well as to certain situations in the Sudan where refugees were often exploited for their cheap labour. Yet, even in the most successful of the camp experiences cited, it appeared that women were involved in activities on a different basis from men, participating less in formal processes of decision-making and left on their own to pursue a variety of income generating activities outside of the major economic initiatives that were structured and supported for men. It is clear that special measures are needed to protect women from neglect or abuse; to ensure women's participation in political processes

of decision-making affecting their lives; and to strengthen women's economic roles as providers for their families.

Official repatriation efforts were, on the whole, satisfactory, though at times marred by a lack of co-ordination among the institutional actors responsible for various phases of the operation. Additionally, it was found that the Chadian government's preoccupation with the political issues surrounding repatriation often prevailed over concern for the socio-economic needs of the refugees being repatriated, leading to some weaknesses in institutional structures and programmes designed to address the latter. Once again, women's experiences of repatriation were found to differ from those of men, particularly in terms of the gender differentials in the decision-making processes leading up to the return. But official programmes of repatriation placed no particular emphasis on the special needs of women returnees — not even of women heads of household who faced particular hardships. It was felt that the inclusion of more women as national policy makers and institutional actors would help overcome this tendency to neglect the needs of women.

The difficulties encountered by Chadian refugees as they returned home to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives were found to vary by region. While all returnees faced certain material hardships, refugees returning to the eastern Sahelian region from the Sudan could generally call on the support of family and community members who had remained behind and had relatively fewer difficulties taking up their previous agropastoral activities. Other refugees returning to south-western Chad from refugee camps in Cameroon found that their lands had been confiscated and the traditional ties of social solidarity ruptured, with hostility on the part of their former neighbours arising in part from local perceptions that the refugees had profited materially from their time in exile. The implications are that programmes of assistance in the regions of return cannot be designed around the assumption that traditional ties of social solidarity will be automatically reactivated or that all returnees will have recourse to the support of the "extended family". Programmes must instead be based on careful assessment of the complex social dynamics of each region, with special measures designed to alleviate

potential conflict. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to pave the way for and support the positive potential of both male and female refugee returnees as dynamic agents of change.

While many of the assistance programmes established in the regions of return did respond to some of the most immediate needs of the returning refugees and provided an effective springboard from "relief" to "development", there were also numerous shortcomings. These included lack of co-ordination among institutional actors, contradictions in some of the macro-economic policies being imposed on Chadian producers, the weakness of adequate follow-up activities and bottlenecks in marketing resulting from the productivist bias of some of the projects that were implemented. While attempts were made in some programmes to strengthen the roles of women producers — as in the eastern Sahel where women's co-operative groups were initiated — other programmes seemed to focus support on men. This was attributed to prevailing gender biases in project planning and administration and to the weaknesses of government structures responsible for "women's affairs". To a certain degree, all of these assessments are characteristic of the general institutionalization of project aid in Chad and are not specific to the aid furnished to refugee returnees. As such, they call for broad-based reform in development policy and practice.

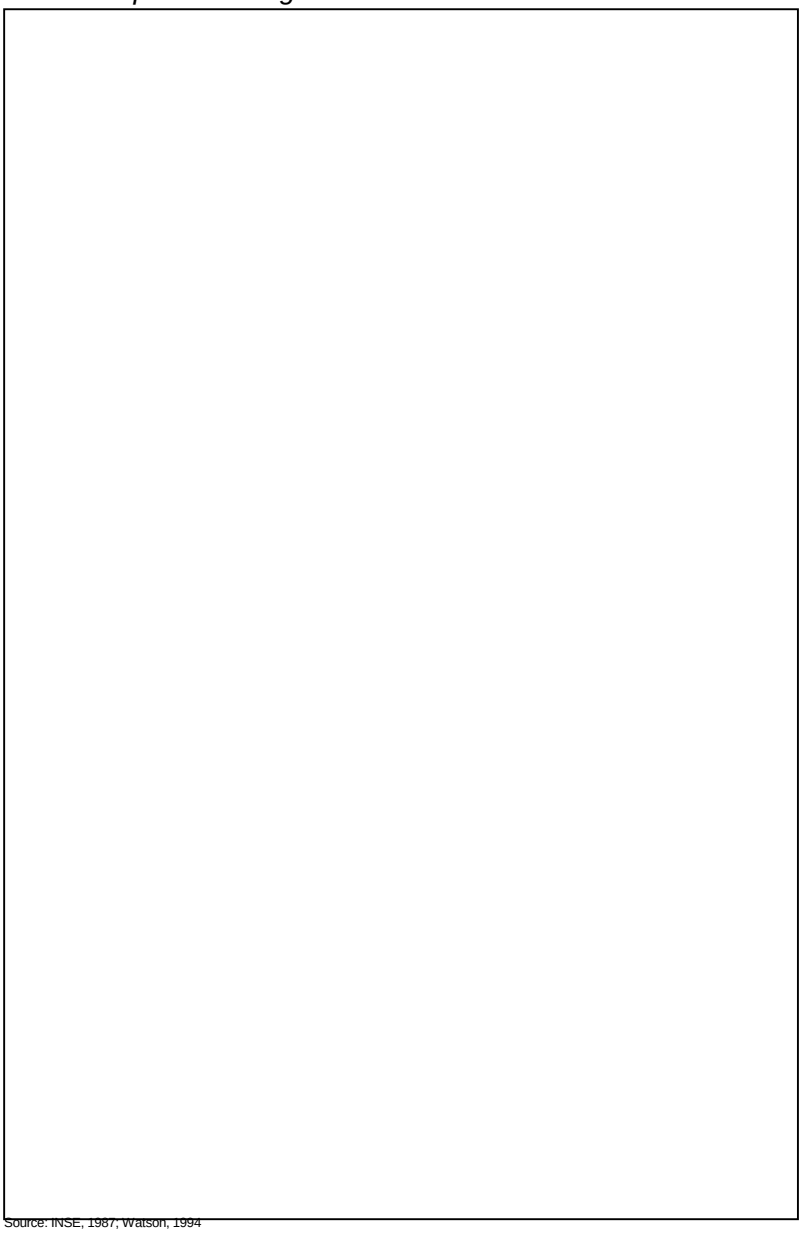
2 THE CHADIAN SETTING

UNDERDEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL UPHEAVAL AND UPROOTEDNESS

BACKGROUND

A land-locked country in the heart of Africa, Chad's vast territory of 1,284,000 square kilometres stretches across three distinct ecosystems, ranging from Saharan desert in the northern half of the country, to Sahelian steppe in the central band between the 12th and 15th degrees latitude north, to the well-watered Soudanian region in the south. Its diverse populations, officially estimated at 6,288,261 in 1993 by the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation and composed of a multitude of different ethno-linguistic groupings, are unevenly spread out over the country's 14 administrative divisions or prefectures. About half are believed to inhabit the central Sahelian zone, which includes the seven prefectures of Batha, Biltine, Kanem, Lac, Guéra, Ouaddaï and Chari-Baguirmi, the latter the seat of the capital, N'Djaména. Almost as many are clustered in the five most densely populated southern prefectures of Logone-Occidental, Logone-Oriental, Mayo-Kebbi, Moyen-Chari and Tandjilé, which make up a mere tenth of the territory but are the most economically productive. Meanwhile, the northern Saharan prefecture of Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti (BET), which covers almost half of the total territory, is estimated to harbour only 2 per cent of the population (see maps 1 and 3).

Map 3 — Ecological zones and economic activities



Source: INSE, 1987; Watson, 1994

Local modes of livelihood have been conditioned by the environment and shaped by history. In the desert regions of the north, pastoralists raise camels and goats and cultivate dates and garden produce in scattered desert oases. Historically the site of great trading empires, caravans are formed in the region for the transport of this produce, along with locally mined natron and salt, for trade to the south and north. In the Sahelian zone, agropastoralism is the predominant mode of production. Vast herds of both camels and cattle and accompanying small stock transect this region in seasonal patterns of transhumance. Millet, a type of dry season sorghum called *berbéré* and groundnuts are extensively cultivated and gum arabic is exploited locally. In some regions of the western and eastern Sahel, humid depressions, or *ouadis*, are interspersed amidst the dunes, allowing irrigated cultivation of wheat, corn and garden produce to be combined with cultivation of rainfed millet on the dunes. The fertile polder zone around Lake Chad in the centre west of the country is conducive to the cultivation of wheat for both traditional subsistence and modern industrial production. In the south, traditional production focuses on grain crops, especially millet and sorghum, along with fruits, vegetables and tubers. Since colonial times, such production has been combined with the cultivation of cotton, which has taken over in this region as the pivot of the national economy and motor of Chad's development as well as the main source of revenue for peasant producers. Fishing provides a livelihood for populations near Lakes Chad and Iro and for those living along the Chari-Logone river system flowing into Lake Chad from the south. Fishing depends largely on traditional techniques and is seasonal in nature; as such it is usually combined with other productive activities. Chad's riverain flood plains also provide favourable conditions for the cultivation of garden produce and, increasingly, for irrigated rice (Watson, 1994).

Women's position in the different productive systems of Chad varies from region to region, with social customs, economic requirements and development processes intertwining to pattern the gendered divisions of labour and allocations of resources. Rural women play a crucial role in the production, transformation and marketing of foodstuffs and other products. Because of their

pivotal position between production and consumption, they are important in ensuring their family's food security. In most of the pastoral and agropastoral systems of the Sahel, women participate in care of the small stock, milking cows and transformation of milk into butter and other products for home consumption and sale. They also help in agricultural tasks, particularly at harvest and post-harvest time. Among the settled peasant cultivators of the south, women play an even more important role in agricultural production, with gendered tasks varying by crop and by phases of the productive cycle. Transformation of agricultural products for consumption or sale is largely the responsibility of women, who are also in charge of marketing much of the surplus food crop. The marketing of cotton, on the other hand, is almost totally in the hands of men, with women consigned mostly to working on their husband's fields. In most southern regions, women's work in the fields may be accompanied by work on garden plots close to the home. In fishing communities, women are largely responsible for the conservation of the catch through smoking or drying and its sale on the market or preparation for family consumption. In all regions, women's primary productive activities are supplemented by the production of handicrafts such as pottery, woven cloth or basketwork for both home use and sale, as well as by child bearing, child care, household maintenance and other domestic tasks.

The dual nature of women's "productive" and "reproductive" roles sets up numerous contradictions in their daily lives. Both are embedded in the larger structures of the social reproduction characteristic of the different regions in Chad which are, for the most part, marked by distinctly asymmetrical gender relations built upon an ideology of male dominance. Thus, in spite of their active economic participation, most rural women have limited ownership of or control over the means of production and little direct access to extension services providing information and inputs that could ease their labour or enhance productivity. So, also, in spite of their prime responsibility for child care, most traditional lineage systems count children within the male line. Mainstream development processes often reinforce or reinvent traditional customs to maintain women in a position of relative

powerlessness in relation to men, while the institutional structures created to promote women in development have generally remained weak or ineffective.

While the Chadian population is predominantly rural at 75 per cent, urbanization has been a growing phenomenon, with the annual urban growth rate of 7 per cent — nearly three times higher than the overall population growth rate, estimated at 2.4 per cent. The capital, N'Djaména, harbours the bulk of the urban population, with regular fluctuations corresponding to seasonal patterns of urban migration. The population of the capital has also swelled and diminished in response to political and natural crises; a massive outflow of population from the city during the civil war period followed by an influx of returning refugees and populations displaced by the drought of 1984. Such factors have combined with the general attraction of capital cities to swell the population to an estimated 550,000 in 1988, or approximately 10 per cent of the total Chadian population at that time, stretching the capital's limited infrastructure to the limit. Other important cities in Chad include Sarh and Moundou in the south, where the country's limited industrial activities are located and Abéché in the east — though the latter has witnessed a historical decline in population, with significant outflows of male migrants seeking wage labour in neighbouring Sudan.

The bulk of the urban population, including women, is engaged in the informal sector of petty commerce, artisanal production and service provision. This sector has, indeed, proved more resilient than the "formal sector" to the successive shocks affecting Chadian society in recent times and has been able to absorb large influxes of the rural poor, though most of them are only just able to eke out a living in substandard conditions. A study of women artisans working in the capital revealed the micro-economic scale on which most of these women operated, with each woman engaged in a variety of commercial and/or service activities since the profits from any one were so small (Woods, 1988). A sample survey of households in N'Djaména in 1985 indicated more than half of the population living below the threshold of poverty (Groupe Huit and Gouvernement du Tchad, 1985); a later survey in 1988 showed little improvement (République du Tchad, 1988c).

With limited industrial development (a mere handful of enterprises accounting for less than a fifth of GDP and employing only 4 per cent of the active population), the economy of Chad is directly dependent on the productivity of its rural populations. But agricultural and livestock activities have remained vulnerable to climatic fluctuations and to environmental degradation and have suffered as well from weak infrastructural development and neglectful or harmful social and economic policies. The country's land-locked situation and the extreme weakness of internal and external transportation and communication infrastructure have inhibited commercial exchanges and hampered balanced regional development. With no railroad, limited internal air traffic, only 40 kilometres of paved roads left in the country in 1982 and many of the other earthen roads and tracks passable only during the dry season, transport of agricultural produce from surplus zones in the south to deficit zones in the north has remained problematic. Unfavourable pricing structures have also impeded development, as has lack of access to credit for many rural producers and the weakness of rural extension services, especially those aimed at supporting food production. Despite successive development policies calling for agricultural diversification and a focus on food security, development inputs have been most heavily invested in the cotton sector, which normally generates around 20 per cent of the government's budgetary revenues and 60 per cent of its total export earnings, with the parastatal CotonTchad as the largest enterprise in the country. Such dependence on a single crop renders the Chadian economy extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in external market forces (as demonstrated most clearly by the "cotton crisis" of 1985-1987) and puts peasant producers at risk. The drastic drop in world cotton prices in 1985, combined with a later drop in the value of the dollar, had disastrous consequences for Chad, which registered an annual loss of 20 per cent in export receipts and needed foreign exchange over the period 1985-1987 (World Bank, 1987:14-15). This demonstrated the extreme vulnerability of an economy focused on the monoculture of a primary product and the strangle-hold that market forces maintain on the health of the economy.

Social indicators for Chad as a whole paint a dismal picture of persistent poverty for both rural and urban populations (see "Chad in Figures", above). While the statistical base is exceptionally weak in Chad, all available indicators point to the numerous hardships faced by the Chadian people in their struggle for survival. Persistent poverty and underdevelopment have fed into and been aggravated by a multitude of events marking the country's troubled history. Numerous accounts have focused on the prevailing social cleavages characterizing the Chadian population; the political instability marking the state; continued instances of external intervention and aggression; and the ravages wrought by drought and international market forces. All of these have contributed to refugee flows from Chad as well as to internal displacements within the country. Combined, they form the backdrop for an understanding of the general uprootedness experienced by Chadian populations in recent years.

CHAD'S TROUBLED HISTORY

Like most African countries whose arbitrarily drawn borders have been inherited from colonial régimes, Chad's present population is marked by significant socio-cultural diversity. Sharing borders with Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Libya, Niger, Nigeria and the Sudan, Chad lies on the "fault zone" of the intersection between the Arabic and Muslim civilizations to the north and sub-Saharan African societies to the south. This basic feature of social geography has historically given rise to one of the major divisions within Chadian society, that between the Muslim north and the Christian and "animist" south, providing a basic source of cultural cleavage with significant political manifestations. The problem has been compounded by multiple divisions within each zone, with numerous "ethnic" rivalries among both northern groups and southern groups arising from an ongoing jockeying for power and competition over resources. While "ethnic" categorizations of the Chadian population remain imprecise, more than 30 major socio-cultural groupings have been identified and over 110 different language dialects are

spoken (Chapelle, 1986:39). Many of these groups straddle national borders, creating fluid frontier zones. Fear of ethnic splintering has been an underlying element in the centralizing tendencies of successive Chadian states which have been reluctant to recognize the legitimacy of local collectivities or to grant autonomy to regional development activities. But efforts to counteract the tendency towards fragmentation and to instil a unified sense of national identity have been continuously confounded by the persistence of local identities, which have more often than not served as a frame of reference and guide for action. These have, in turn, been seized upon and reinforced by external powers engaged in a geopolitical struggle for regional influence, with Libya seeking to extend its territory and Islamic ideology from the north and Western powers (mainly France and the United States) intent on maintaining Chad firmly within the Western-dominated state and market system. Hints of potential oil wealth to be found on Chadian territory have added fuel to the conflict (Kelley, 1986; Watson, 1994).

In pre-colonial times, three distinct kingdoms or empires arose in the Sahel (Kanem in the north-west; Ouaddaï in the north-east; and Baguirmi in the centre-west), basing their power on the control of trans-Saharan commerce, superior military might and political centralization reinforced through the implantation of Islam as a unifying force in the north. In contrast, southern populations, adhering to various customary religions, were for the most part organized in decentralized chieftainships within dispersed agricultural villages that were periodically raided for slaves by their northern neighbours.

From 1910, when Chad became part of French Equatorial Africa, colonial policy for the economic *mise en valeur* of the territory was to focus on the southern zone, later termed “useful Chad”, where the cultivation of cotton was forcibly introduced in 1928. What minimal infrastructural development was accorded to the territory that has been described as France’s “cinderella colony” (Buijtenhuijs, 1989:54) was for the most part concentrated in the south, where limited education in French to train a subaltern colonial civil service fostered the development of a nascent class of bureaucrats. When Chad emerged at independence in 1960 in a state characterized as one of

"absolute underdevelopment" (Bouquet, 1982:162), it was from this pool of French-speaking, christianized southerners that most of the political leaders and administrators of the First Republic were drawn, under the presidency of François Tombalbaye, himself a southerner of the Sara ethno-linguistic group.

Conflicts were not long in appearing, especially after 1962 when Tombalbaye outlawed all political parties but his own, the Progressive Chadian Party, or PPT (see "Chronology of Events", above, for a recapitulation of Chad's troubled history). The dissolution of the national assembly in 1963 was followed by an uprising in the capital Fort Lamy (N'Djaména) which was violently suppressed. Key opposition leaders from the north and centre were arrested while others fled to neighbouring Libya, Nigeria and the Sudan to continue their political activities in exile. In 1965, a popular revolt against excessive taxes among the peasants of Mangalmé, in central Chad, was again violently suppressed by the central government in an incident that sparked a movement of generalized armed resistance to the Tombalbaye régime in the centre and east. The Chadian National Liberation Front (FROLINAT) was created the following year from a base in the Sudan and began armed insurrections in the eastern prefectures of Ouaddaï and Biltine, resulting in more repression. The situation of generalized insecurity in this region led to the flight of more of the outlawed political leaders, this time accompanied by merchants and Muslim students of the Arabic-language school at Abéché who had difficulty finding jobs in the French-speaking Chadian administration.

By 1968-1969, opposition to Tombalbaye had spread to the northern prefecture of Borkou-Ennedi-Tibesti (BET). The violent suppression of uprisings in this region, accomplished with the aid of French troops called in by Tombalbaye, provoked an exodus among the nomadic pastoral inhabitants and led to the exile in Libya of the Derdei, or spiritual leader of the northern Toubou group. Henceforward, the First Republic's relations with Libya were to fluctuate between outright rupture in 1971, after a failed coup was attributed to Libyan support for opposition movements and *rapprochement* in 1972, with Tombalbaye's tacit acceptance of a Libyan military presence in the north of Chad. With roots in the non-ratified Franco-Mussolini treaty, conflicts deriving from

Libya's outright occupation of the band of territory known as the "Aouzou Strip" on the border between Chad and Libya date from this period.

The years from 1968 to 1974 were also marked by severe drought in the Sahelian and Saharan regions of Chad which caused thousands of deaths, destabilized productive systems and provoked massive displacements among the primarily agropastoral populations of these regions. While some of these groups sought refuge in neighbouring countries, others were to swell the numbers of the "internally displaced", migrating southwards to more favourable ecological zones and provoking, in turn, intensified conflicts with the settled southern populations. The mismanagement by the Tombalbaye régime of the food aid sent to Chad at this time created an international scandal and contributed to the unpopularity of the Tombalbaye régime, especially among northerners who saw some of their relief supplies diverted to southern supporters of the president (Decalo, 1987:122-123). Resistance to Tombalbaye also began to spread to the south, especially after 1973, when the PPT was disbanded and reconstituted as the National Movement for Social and Cultural Revolution (MNRCS) and a "cultural revolution", inspired by Zairian and Haitian models of "authenticity", was launched. Based on a concept of *tchaditude*, the revolution involved the forcible reconversion of southern civil servants to their "animist" roots through the obligatory reinstitution of traditional initiation rites or *yondo*. This was combined with coercive economic policies to boost cotton production in the south. Finally, in 1975, Tombalbaye was killed in a military coup, which brought to birth the short-lived Second Republic under General Malloum.

Opposition to the central government continued in the north, where a generalized offensive launched by the Libyan-backed FROLINAT in the BET led to the taking of the northern capital of Faya Largeau by the rebels in 1978. The French military was again called upon to intervene and to stop the advance of FROLINAT towards the capital, N'Djaména. Meanwhile, a split in the leadership of FROLINAT pit Goukouni Oueddei against Hissein Habré, both of the Toubou ethnic group, but members of different rival clans. After negotiations between Malloum and Habré, Habré was integrated into the government of the Second

Republic as prime minister, but a rift between the two soon emerged as clashes between their two armies escalated. In 1979, civil war broke out in N'Djaména, with Goukouni Oueddei's forces joining the fray from the north. Southern inhabitants of the city, including the majority of civil servants in the central government, left the capital en masse — many returning to their home regions in the south. Others joined northern residents fleeing across the Chari River to seek refuge in neighbouring Cameroon or Nigeria. Tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims intensified as executions of southern administrators in the east were met by reprisal massacres of Muslims in the south. Two successive attempts to form a Government of National Union (GUNT) under the presidency of Goukouni Oueddei foundered as internal rivalries continued. Southerners refused to recognize the authority of the GUNT, setting up a permanent committee under the leadership of Colonel Kamougué as a parallel government based in Moundou in the south. Meanwhile, rival warlords jockeyed for control of fiefdoms in the north. The Chadian state had effectively ceased to exist.

A second civil war, even bloodier than the first, engulfed N'Djaména in March of 1980, pitting Habré against Goukouni and lasting for nine months. This provoked a second massive exodus of the civilian population from the capital, estimated at some 100,000 (Kristoffersson, 1988). Most joined Chadians already established as refugees in neighbouring Cameroon, especially in the town of Kousseri just across the river from N'Djaména. Others fled to the Central African Republic, Nigeria, the Sudan, or even farther afield (Guest, 1981). With Libyan troops intervening on the side of Goukouni, Habré was finally pushed out of the capital to regroup his forces in the east. A period of relative calm descended as Libyan troops withdrew and inter-African forces were sent by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to keep the peace. In 1981, after a general amnesty was announced by Goukouni, the first wave of refugees returned to Chad, with CNAR created to facilitate their return. In June of 1982, however, Habré's troops advanced from the east to recapture the capital after sharp fighting on the outskirts. As the inter-African forces withdrew, Goukouni fled to the BET to continue opposition from

the north and a new wave of refugees was produced, composed this time of Habré's political and military opponents.

THE THIRD REPUBLIC

Proceeding to consolidate his power, Habré allied with dissident southern troops to recapture the southern cities of Moundou and Sarh, forcing Colonel Kamougué and his followers to flee. Promulgating the Fundamental Act as law of the land in 1982, Habré was sworn in as president of the Third Republic, forming a widely representative government and establishing conditions for another cautious wave of refugee returns. The first International Conference on Assistance to Chad was held in Geneva in November of 1982, attended largely by Western donors anxious to re-establish stability in the region and to counter Libyan expansion. The National Plan of Reconstruction, elaborated under GUNT in 1981, was presented for donor support at the conference by the newly victorious Habré. Aimed at recreating the administration, rebuilding damaged infrastructures and responding to the most urgent food and health needs of populations affected by war, it garnered more than US$ 175 million for its programmes (Kelley, 1986:57).

But the troubles were not yet over, as the Libyan-backed offensives of Goukouni Oueddei continued in the north. This was accompanied in 1983 by renewed opposition in the south as excesses committed by northern troops in the region spawned the birth of resistance movements of commandos (or *codos*) under the nominal authority of Colonel Kotiga. Thus, while populations in the northern territory of BET were faced with conditions of occupation by Libya and submitted to periodic outbreaks of violence as Habré's Western-backed troops sought to regain control, populations in the southern regions were caught up in a series of *codo* attacks and central government reprisals. The escalating cycle of violence in the south between 1983 and 1984 produced further massive waves of refugees from the three southern prefectures of Moyen-Chari, Logone-Oriental and Logone-Occidental, as civilian populations sought refuge in neighbouring Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

To make matters worse, 1984 marked the height of a second drought in Chad, the effects of which were even more disastrous than before. The populations of the Sahelian zone were most severely hit, as crops failed, herds died and famine stalked the land, producing yet another massive wave of internal dislocations as well as flows of desperate populations to more favourable zones in neighbouring countries. Cereal production in the Sahelian zone dropped from an estimated average of 220,000 metric tons per year for 1976-1978 to 82,000 metric tons in 1984 while the total livestock supply was cut by a third (FAO, 1985). But this time, through the combined effects of drought and prolonged conditions of generalized instability in the countryside, the southern agricultural regions were also affected and starvation threatened everywhere. Estimates for 1984 suggest a total of 1.5 million people suffering from lack of food, with about half a million displaced as a combined result of drought and insecurity (FAO, 1985).

Relief and development efforts launched by the Habré régime again drew extensively on donor assistance. Massive food distributions were launched and emergency medical teams were deployed throughout the country. The Interim Development Plan of 1986-1988, presented to donors in 1985 at a second International Conference for the Economic Development of Chad in Geneva, aimed at restimulating the economy while at the same time responding to the effects of drought. Its four main lines of action aimed at satisfying the basic needs of the Chadian population through measures to promote food self-sufficiency; correcting the consequences of drought through resettlement of displaced populations; sustaining economic growth through diversification and intensification of production; and achieving equitable income distribution. Entirely dependent on aid for its various programmes, the plan received US$ 424 million in pledges of external support as aid agencies arrived in the country en masse (Hodgkinson, 1991).

From 1984 onwards, as the Habré régime consolidated its power, the twin tasks of state building and economic rehabilitation were pursued. Both proved daunting challenges in a country wrecked by war. In 1984, Habré dissolved his military governing body, the Command Council of the Armed Forces of the North

(CCFAN), replacing it with the National Union for Independence and Revolution (UNIR) as the ruling party. Through a policy of "national reconciliation", successive accords were contracted with dissident movements whose leaders were persuaded to rally to the régime with offers of power sharing and other benefits. The re-establishment of conditions of security coupled with the granting of general amnesties to former opposition members occasioned successive waves of returns among the Chadian populations who had sought refuge abroad (see chapter 4). In 1986, accords with the *codos* brought about conditions for the reintegration of north and south and a return to peace in the productive southern zone. From 1987, successive military victories by Habré's French- and American-backed troops in the north forced the retreat of Goukouni's Libyan allies from the territory they had occupied in the BET and in 1988 Chad and Libya renewed diplomatic relations.

With the aid of the international community, the Habré government attempted to rebuild shattered infrastructures and stimulate development. Foreign aid remained crucial throughout the 1980s, both for the survival of the Chadian state and for the survival of populations suffering from social upheaval, drought and persistent poverty. Aid was, in fact, described as one of the fastest growing "sectors" of the Chadian economy, growing at an annual rate of 23 per cent between 1983 and 1987 (Rone, 1988:43). Given the chronic imbalances in the Chadian economy and the total absence of internal savings, external aid financed a significant portion of the budget deficit and the entire development budget. Foreign assistance in the form of food aid, budgetary aid and development aid between 1982 and 1988 far exceeded total export earnings and accounted for almost a quarter of GDP (République du Tchad, 1988b:36). With almost 80 aid agencies active in Chad in 1988, per capita aid more than doubled over the period 1986-1989, rising from US$ 23 to US$ 52 (République du Tchad, 1990a). This may be compared with other sub-Saharan African states where per capita aid for the same period averaged US$ 26 (PNUD, 1989:10).

Even with such massive inputs of aid, however, development remained an elusive goal. The war had paralysed production, destroyed physical infrastructure, closed down businesses and

put to flight many of the most qualified personnel, causing the Chadian economy to contract by almost 30 per cent (World Bank, 1987). One study noted that of over 20,000 employees engaged by 20 enterprises in the capital in 1977, only 1,400 were left by 1986 (République du Tchad, 1987:123-128, cited in Passang et al., 1992:25). In the south, where cotton served as the chief export and generator of foreign exchange and normally provided the motor for Chadian development, production figures of 137,000 tons in 1978 fell to 71,000 in 1981, with revenues falling 29 per cent from 41 billion FCFA in 1977 to 29 billion FCFA in 1984 (Passang et al., 1992:25). The drought had further disrupted rural production systems, causing massive dislocations of the most economically active segments of the population and creating a dependence on food aid. With the collapse of the limited health and social services before the war and drought, a population already weakened by hunger and strife fell prey to disease and death as relief efforts were undertaken. Thereafter, a sharp drop in world market prices for cotton, Chad's chief export and the motor of its economy, led to a severe loss of revenue for the state and threatened disaster for the peasant producers of the south who depended on cotton for their livelihood. Overall, a decline in GDP of 1.5 per cent was registered for the period between 1985 and 1988 as emergency measures instituted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) aimed at "rationalizing" the cotton sector through cut-backs in production and costs.

Despite such set-backs, the period between 1988 and 1990 witnessed the reconstruction of basic infrastructures and at least a semblance of return to political stability. In 1989, a new constitution was created and Habré was "re-elected" by popular referendum to another seven-year term as president. This was followed in 1990 by elections to a new national assembly, the first since Tombalbaye's dissolution of the assembly in the 1970s. The Orientation Plan for the 1990s, presented to donors for funding at a third international conference in 1990, aimed at longer term development including increased production through the modernization of economic structures; development of human resources through investment in education, training and basic health care; and re-establishment of financial equilibrium through

fiscal reform and the "rationalization" of public services (République du Tchad, 1989d). In a document later added to the Plan, further emphasis was given to the need for popular participation in the management of the economy, in a context foreseeing the progressive "disengagement" of the state. Measures were to aim at promoting community initiatives and supporting non-governmental organizations and local associations (République du Tchad, 1990c). But this plan, like so many of the development plans in the past, proved to promise more on paper than the government and its international partners were able to deliver in practice. Rhetoric and reality continued to clash on the Chadian scene in the split between what was being said and what was being done.

Meanwhile, opposition to Habré's régime continued to fester. Increasingly repressive internal security measures and forcible recruitment into the armed forces helped fuel discontent. A coup attempt by high ranking government officials was foiled in 1989. But one of its principal instigators, Idriss Deby, member of a rival northern ethnic group, escaped to continue opposition from the Sudan. In 1990, he launched another coup, this time successful, taking power from Habré who was put to flight along with many of his followers. As a new régime took over the reigns of power, the long-suffering people of Chad could only watch and wait to see if this time social justice and sustainable development would prevail. It is within such a politically turbulent, socially vulnerable and environmentally fragile context that the problems of Chadian refugees and returnees evolved.

3 FLIGHT AND EXILE
THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

HOW MANY UPROOTED?

In view of the constant comings and goings, estimates of the number of Chadians who have sought refuge abroad are almost impossible to come by and those that are ventured are difficult to confirm. The first great wave of refugees from the violence of fighting between 1979 and 1982, commonly referred to in Chad simply as “the events”, involved thousands of people. At the height of the civil war in 1980, it has been estimated that at least 260,000 people fled into neighbouring countries (Kennedy, 1985:26). The capital was practically emptied of its inhabitants at this time. As continuing insecurity and conditions of drought between 1984 and 1985 led to further displacements of population, some have estimated that over 185,000 Chadians fled the country: 121,000 crossing into the Sudan; 40,000 joining the 7,000 or so Chadians already in the Central African Republic; 13,500 seeking refuge in Cameroon; 3,600 moving into Benin; and more flowing into other neighbouring countries such as Nigeria (Kennedy, 1985:26). Registration figures recorded by international agencies concerned by the phenomenon, notably UNHCR, have placed numbers for this period much higher, at close to 1,500,000 (as reported in Timberlake, 1985, cited in Passang et al., 1992:24); some reports on repatriations raise the numbers from the Central African Republic to 70,000 and from

Cameroon to 25,000 (Bearez and De Tavora, 1987). Reliable estimates of refugee flows are rendered difficult not only as a result of such discrepancies in the numbers reported from different organizations, but also in view of the "informal" status of many of the Chadians who fled without official registration as refugees in the countries of exile. Furthermore, estimates advanced for refugees do not fully reflect the magnitude of social dislocation and uprootedness characterizing this period, for they do not take into account the untold thousands of other Chadians who were internally displaced within the country (see inset 1).

CONDITIONS OF FLIGHT

Conditions of flight from Chad varied from region to region and were dependent on the particular nature of the situation provoking Chadians to leave their homes in the first place. In the first precipitous flight from the capital under bombardments from both sides during the civil wars of 1979 and 1980, many painful human dramas transpired as loved ones were lost in the violence and confusion. Some of the most eloquent testimonies of the hardship and panic experienced are provided by women refugees whose concerns for their own safety were amplified by concern for the safety of their children. A mother crossing the Chari River for the relative security of nearby Kousseri had attached her infant to her back, only to find that he had drowned by the time they reached the other side. Another mother saw her daughter killed by a bullet in the head as they crossed the river in panic (Passang et al., 1992:26). When interviewed about their experiences, some women were resolute about repressing such traumatic memories:

> *I do not even want to think about the period of exile we experienced and especially not about the conditions of departure, with my belongings on my hand and the children in my arms as we crossed the river* (testimony of Mme C, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:26.

Women precipitously fleeing the violence in N'Djaména often did so in the absence of their husbands or other family members, whose

Inset 1 — A question of identity: Profile of Chadian refugees

While some Chadian refugees conformed strictly to the Geneva Convention of 1951 defining refugees as those fearing persecution "on the basis of race, religion or nationality", most fell under the expanded OAU definition of 1969 embracing those fleeing "events gravely troubling the public order". Indeed, motivations for departure from Chad were multiple and often combined, with social, economic and political factors intermingled in response to the threats posed to survival. Fear of political persecution among adherents of the various factions contending for power and their families was accompanied and often overshadowed by flight occasioned by the sheer force of violence threatening the lives of civilian populations caught up in a theatre of war. To these two basic causes for departure were added the ecological collapse and loss of livelihood resulting from conditions of drought.

A further category of Chadians may be considered more specifically as "economic migrants". In border zones in particular, movements of groups and individuals in search of more favourable economic conditions in general and wage labour in particular have been a common phenomenon throughout Chad's history. In 1975, for example, even before the most turbulent period of social upheaval, some 700,000 Chadians were estimated to have emigrated to neighbouring states (Dibalbé, 1975:43, cited in Passang et al., 1992:27). Such a process is often facilitated by common ethnic identities and kinship ties across the borders. Some groups, in addition, often have mobility built into the economic repertoires characteristic of their lifestyles. Such is the case, for example, for nomadic pastoralists and fisherfolk whose boundaries are defined less by political borders between states than by seasonal variability of resources within a wider ecological zone. Such movements were, however, no doubt accentuated by the situation of armed conflict and economic breakdown characterizing Chad's recent history and, as such, the legal distinctions between "economic migrants" and "refugees" become more blurred (Passang et al., 1992:26-28).

subsequent whereabouts would be a constant source of worry. Many left in such haste that all belongings were abandoned:

> *In 1979, I took refuge in Kousseri with my children but not my husband. Even my young child's bottle was left behind in N'Djaména in the haste of our flight* (testimony in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:23).

On the other hand, other women, whose husbands were among the political dissidents forced to leave families behind in their flight for their lives, later received messages from them sent through a network of travellers and traders, instructing them on escape routes to follow and advising them on precautions to take along the way. Women would hide the identities of their husbands when questioned en route and would travel very lightly or would distribute their children to other travellers to avoid calling attention to themselves. Such tactics allowed the women to advance towards refuge by stages. Such was the case for many women refugees in Kousseri, Cameroon, who were able to officially register as refugees and eventually ended up in Nigeria where they joined their husbands in exile (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:25, cases of Mme An and Mme B).

Some women, fearful witnesses to the violent conflagrations later engulfing other parts of the country, particularly in the south, nevertheless delayed their departures, mistakenly assuming that they would be spared. After all, they reasoned, as women they were not generally involved in the fighting among the armed factions and therefore presented no threat. So they hung back in their homes, or, if they fled, they did so empty-handed, fully expecting the violence to pass quickly and things to return to normal. Such expectations were soon dashed, however, as they discovered that no one and nothing was immune to the troubles that were to go on and on. The following three testimonies are from women in the south recounting the conditions of flight:

> *Then came the "events" of September 1984. I took flight, albeit a bit late, as I had thought they would spare me, given my condition of woman without husband or children and thus poor. But, alas, I saw my house burn before my eyes* (testimony No. 5, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:91).

> *My mother was trapped en route. She couldn't run like the others because of her age. I returned to look for her and found her along the road. She had been able to escape thanks to the smoke that covered the whole village. She had been accused of being the mother of* codos *[members of southern oppositional army]* (testimony No. 10, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:96).

> *Then, in 1984, we were forced to flee. Myself, I took nothing, thinking that we would return the next day to peace and quiet. However, it lasted for months and months. In the country where we sought refuge, we suffered terribly — no house, no food, almost everyone was sick. Children were dying day by day* (testimony No. 9, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:95).

Many women, recounting the events leading up to their flight, expressed astonishment that such a cataclysm could befall their region and seemed not to understand the causes of a war that appeared to spring out of thin air. Comparing her peaceful life in the past with the horror of subsequent war, one southern woman recounts her traumatic loss:

> *I lived with my husband who was then a [cotton] farmer ... Our children were well nourished. Anyway, there was a lot of solidarity among the villagers. You could work with your relative's plough for free or, after the harvest was in, you could give him some crops. Then, I don't know why, in 1984 war broke out. People started killing each other and so I fled. I fled because my husband had been killed. I followed the others to Poli-Faro [Cameroon]. I didn't know whether my husband had been buried or eaten by the vultures. When I think of that, it hurts. I had to learn the news from others* (testimony No. 8, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:93-94).

Some families suffered successive periods of uprooting, occasioning new losses and forcing new adaptations each time, as recounted by this woman from the south who was married to a soldier serving in the north:

> *The events of 1979 forced my husband and I to leave Am Timan [Salamat] for Sarh [Moyen-Chari]. Life was very difficult. I returned to my father's village where I took up cultivation of sorghum and groundnuts for subsistence. Much later, with the help of my father, who is the chief's body guard* (goumier)*, I was able to buy two oxen. During the planting season, I would borrow my father's plough, which enabled me to cultivate two or three* cordes *(0.5 of a hectare) of cotton a year. My husband who no longer received his wages was obliged to join us in Moussafayo [Moyen-Chari]. I can say that we lived peacefully. My children attended school in the village and I would go to Sarh from time to time to buy essentials such as soap, sugar and salt. Then came the "events" of 1984. Soldiers invaded our village, massacred the young men and set fire to houses and granaries. It was thus that we were forced to flee with everyone else* (testimony No. 10, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:96)*.*

In contrast to the suddenness of events causing flight from the capital and the south, families of the Sahelian zone were faced with the slow but inexorable effects of drought. This led many to adopt various "coping strategies" in successive stages before absolute destitution forced them to flee conditions of famine (cf Sen, 1981; Watts, 1983; and Swift, 1989, for comparative analyses of adaptations to drought and famine in different Sahelian contexts). One woman from a village near Adré in eastern Chad, an independent farmer separated from her husband, describes her futile attempts to shed assets in order to withstand the drought. Another woman, married and mother of eight, describes the sale of livestock as a necessary measure to gather resources for the flight to the Sudan:

> *In 1984, famine struck the region. I sold everything, but finally I went to the office of the sub-prefect where they were distributing porridge to people. Each day the number of starving people increased and so we decided to go elsewhere. And so I followed the others as far as Ndouki in the Sudan* (testimony No. 14, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:100)*.*

> *In 1984, a new drought took us by surprise. We only had six heads of cattle, but we were obliged to sell off two of them. This allowed us to undertake the voyage as far as Houmra in the Sudan* (testimony of Mme Medina, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:27).

One strategy to cope with drought included the splitting up of the family unit, with men usually going off first to seek labour in neighbouring Sudan. While the men would sometimes be accompanied by the older male children, younger children and girls normally seemed to be left at home in the care of the mother. Such situations not only left the women and children with the burden of labour and upkeep in the household, but could lead to permanent separation, as women, abandoned by their husbands and faced with deteriorating conditions, were later forced to seek refuge for themselves and their children:

> *In 1984, when famine struck, my husband said that he was going to look for work in the Sudan. I waited in vain for him to come back, then I followed the others as far as Tandelta [Sudan]. I didn't find him there and, as we arrived very late, we didn't receive any assistance. I worked off and on as wood cutter, water carrier, grain grinder. I took on all sorts of activities, but the proceeds did not allow me to feed my children. I wanted to come back to die in my country, but I didn't know the way back* (testimony No. 11, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:98).

> *In 1984, I went to visit my mother who was ill in Amsibekha. It was during the famine. Later my mother died of hunger. On returning home, I was told that my husband and my two children had left for the Sudan in search of food. So I followed after them* (testimony of Mme Dojdi, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:27).

At other times, it was the woman who left first, taking the initiative to leave home, husband and other kin behind in a desperate bid to ensure her own survival and that of her children. Such was the case for this mother of three from eastern Chad:

> *Each day another one of our animals died. My husband in complete despair pledged to stay on and die with his herd. So I decided to leave with the children. Leaving my husband, I left my old blind mother in his care and followed the others to Assirni, the Sudan* (testimony of Mme Wal, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:27).

Additional information on the combined effects of drought and insecurity on the lives of Sahelian populations was obtained through independent interviews conducted in the course of a project sponsored by the London-based PANOS Institute to encourage Chadian journalists to reconstruct life in Chad during the war. A woman from a nomadic pastoral group originally from the central Sahelian prefecture of Batha described the situation as follows:

> *Before, life was sweet, pastures were good and we would move altogether in big groups. During the rainy season, we would group together in the* ouadis *north of Djédaa where all the hills would be green. During the dry season, we would travel towards the south between Bitkine and Lake Fitri in search of pasture. We had a lot of animals, all in good health, and we had plenty of grain and sugar. Afterwards, however, life became very difficult. For one thing because of the drought, which caused special suffering to the herders of cattle among us. But also because of the insecurity, which was such that everyone lived in fear* (testimony of Khadidja in Bangui, Tchombi and Watson, 1992:53).

This woman spoke of her group being caught between the "government of the day" — the official government in power — and the "government of the night" — rebel groups from the region fighting in opposition to the central government. Each would raid her group's herds for provisions and threaten violence if loyalties were in question, until life gradually grew intolerable and the group was forced to split apart in search of survival:

> *Finally one day, during the festival of Aid El Kabir, when we found ourselves outside of Ati [Batha prefecture], we held a council which drew together all heads of* feriks *and heads*

> *of household. Women didn't participate in this kind of council, but it concerned all of us — men and women. That is when we decided to move. Some went to Niger. Others, who had lost all their animals, stayed near Ati where they received food aid from the government. But we decided to take our camels and move to western Chad where people said things were more stable. At Bokoro, Dourbali, Linia, Farcha [towns in Chari-Baguirmi] — each time we would present ourselves to the local chiefs, sending emissaries with gifts of goats and sugar, calling on their sense of solidarity with brothers in distress. They would grant us the right to pasture our animals and install our camps in their region* (Bangui, Tchombi and Watson, 1992:53).

Women faced special dangers in the course of their often precipitous flight from the prevailing insecurity and/or famine conditions characterizing the different regions in Chad. The local press, for example, reported that "in crossing borders, women are sexually and economically vulnerable; numerous cases of rape and sexual exploitation have been documented" (**N'Djaména Hebdo**, 1991:13, cited in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:21). Although such cases were not independently confirmed by the research on refugee women in Chad, owing perhaps to the delicacy of the matter and traditional reticence, refugee experiences elsewhere highlight the need to extend special measures of protection to women refugees (see, for example, Johnsson, 1988; Ferris, 1990; and UNHCR, 1990a). The sheer physical hardship endured along the route through unfamiliar terrain; the lack of food and medical care; and constant exposure to the elements took their toll on many of the weakest members of the society. Some women spoke of the horrors of abandoning children who perished along the way. Others attributed their permanently weakened condition to the illnesses and exhaustion suffered in flight. Many women mentioned the physical discomforts and ill health suffered as they attempted to adapt to new climates and new foodstuffs, with some reduced to foraging for wild roots and berries for months in the bush in a desperate attempt to keep their families alive until a place of refuge could be found.

LIFE IN EXILE

While some members of the élite (students, professionals and leaders of political parties) were able to take refuge abroad, in countries of the industrialized world (particularly France) or in other African countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Benin, the mass of Chadian refugees fled to immediately neighbouring countries (see map 4). Of these, distinctions may be drawn between those who received assistance in camps or settlements specifically established in the different host countries in response to the influx of refugees, and those who "spontaneously" settled among local populations and devised their own strategies for survival. According to the INSH research team, roughly two thirds of the Chadian refugees are estimated to have received some form of assistance, while the remaining third settled on their own, engaging in a variety of agricultural activities, or joining the informal sectors of the urban zone (Passang et al., 1992:30). Other sources suggest on the contrary that the majority of Chadians fled without formal registration as refugees in neighbouring countries and thus were not eligible for UNHCR assistance (Bearez and De Tavora, 1987:9). As with the total number of refugees, there are no clear statistics to support either of these two arguments.

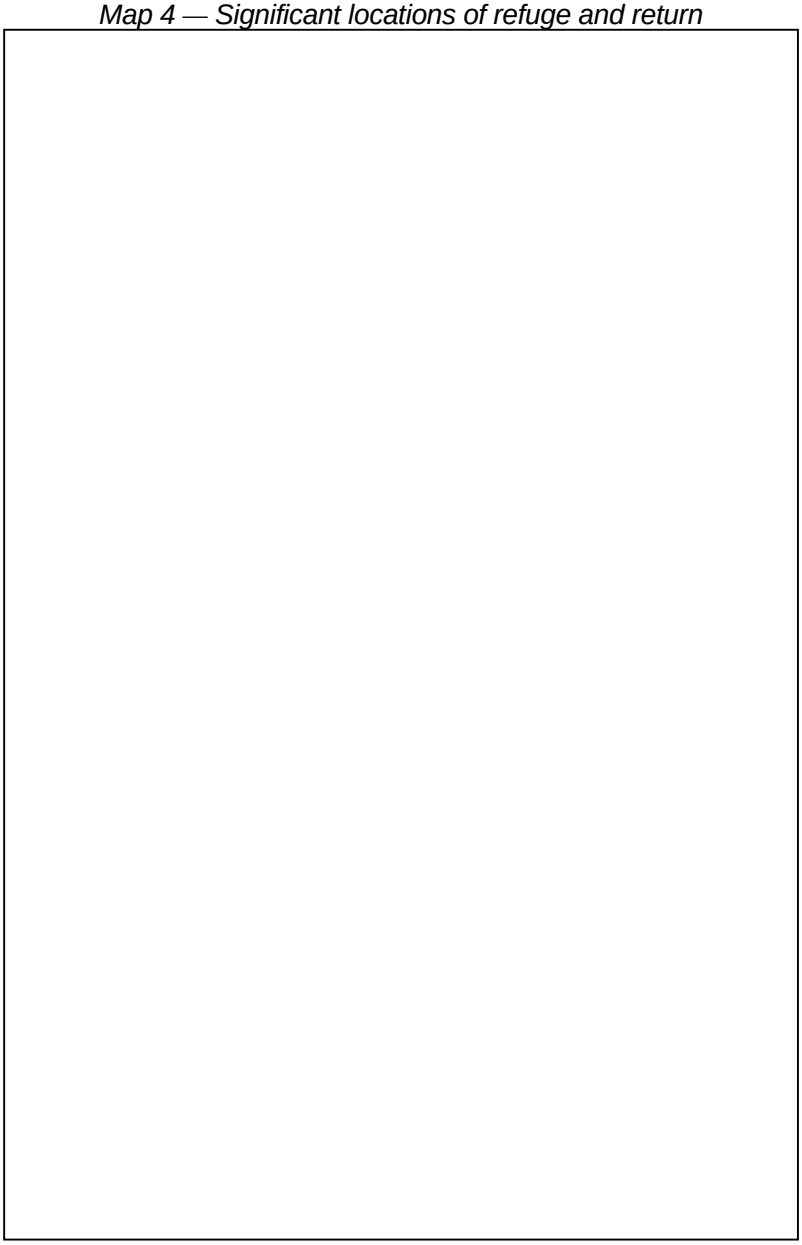
Because the focus of the INSH research team was on the programmes of assistance conditioning the socio-economic situation of refugees on their **return** to Chad, more research is needed on the precise nature of programmes established for refugees in the different countries of exile. However, piecing together the testimonies of the refugees themselves, as recounted in the research team's report of findings, with other available external literature, it is clear that conditions varied from country to country and from camp to camp.

The following sketch is drawn essentially from an account of the situation of Chadian refugees appearing in the US Committee for Refugees' **World Refugee Survey** of 1985 (Kennedy, 1985), with information from the INSH reports and other sources. It seeks to provide the general context within which the variety of

experiences encountered by Chadians in exile may be understood.

In the Sudan, in response to refugee flows from Ethiopia, Zaire and Uganda, in addition to Chad, official government policy was to attempt to establish camps where refugees were given land, seeds, tools and food until the first or second harvest. This was reported to be the case for some 60,000 Chadian refugees settled by 1985 in three organized camps initially established in the Sudan's Darfur prefecture, with assistance provided by international organizations such as the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Islamic African Relief Agency and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in co-operation with the Sudanese

Map 4 — Significant locations of refuge and return



Commission for Refugees and various NGOs (Kennedy, 1985). However, according to the research team, actual practices at some camps in the Sudan seemed to include and indeed emphasize or encourage work by Chadian refugees on Sudanese co-operatives, leading to the potential for exploitation (Passang et al., 1992). Meanwhile, a further 60,000 refugees who were estimated to have spontaneously settled along the border zone between eastern Chad and western Sudan also attempted to eke out a living without official assistance, with more arriving periodically in later years of sporadic insecurity in this region. Common ethnic and cultural identities and a history of nomadic movements across this border may have facilitated spontaneous Chadian settlement in some of these areas. However, the same drought that provoked some of the refugee movement in this zone had also ravaged the Sudan, where estimates at the time suggested that at least 40 per cent of the 20 million Sudanese population was facing starvation. Furthermore, the Sudanese government was facing its own political crises and period of readjustment after the 1985 coup. This compounded the problem of difficult logistics which at times hampered the distribution of emergency foodstuffs in the area (Kennedy, 1985:26-27). The situation was rendered even more delicate due to the military-political activities of some of the Chadians refuged in the Sudan, with the rival groups jockeying for power periodically retreating to bases established in Sudanese territory.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), an estimated 40,000 Chadians crossed the border from southern Chad in 1984-1985 to join the approximately 7,000 Chadians already in the country. While the earlier arrivals had mostly established residence in the capital, Bangui, the later wave of refugees settled in border areas, swelling the populations of such villages as Chari, Kabo and Moyenne-Sido and moving as well into more remote uninhabited areas. Outbreaks of violence on the border in 1985 led the government of the Central African Republic to issue a state of alert as official frontiers were closed and registration of refugees halted. It was then decided to transfer the Chadian refugees to camps some 150 miles away from the border to settlement sites at Fah, Boubou, Daya and Boya (Kennedy, 1985:27-28). As with the situation in the Sudan, tensions were heightened due to the

fact that some *codos* operated out of bases in the Central African Republic (Decalo, 1987:xxii).

Cameroon witnessed several influxes of Chadian refugees during this period; the town of Kousseri in particular swelled in size in 1979 and 1980 as residents of N'Djaména fled across the Chari River to escape the civil war engulfing their capital. Even after a massive repatriation of Chadian refugees in 1982, several thousand remained in the country and were joined in 1984 by between 8,000 and 9,000 others fleeing renewed fighting in southern Chad. The Cameroon government, which had always provided free entry to Chadians, set up a special programme in 1982 in co-operation with UNHCR to channel the flows to a permanent refugee camp at Poli near the Nigerian border in the department of Poli-Faro in north-central Cameroon. Run by, among others, Dutch Volunteers, with food distributions from the World Food Programme (WFP), the programme aimed to help the Chadian refugees become self-sufficient in food production. At the same time, because of limited capacity at the settlement, several thousand refugees remained in Kousseri or in rural villages along the border with Chad where many managed to support themselves by providing labour on the vast cotton plantations that are an integral part of the Cameroonian economy in the region (Kennedy, 1985:28). According to the INSH report, even those refugees at the camp in Poli-Faro participated in cotton production, their labour boosting productivity in the region (Passang et al., 1992:31). It was estimated by the team that a full 25 per cent of the cotton production in the department of Faro was furnished by refugees at the camp, making the region the second highest cotton producer in the country (Passang et al., 1992:74). Thus, the Cameroonian government's policy of assistance to Chadian refugees can be seen to be integrally related to its development policies for this formerly underdeveloped part of the country (Passang et al., 1992:31).

Other Chadian refugees fled to Nigeria, for the most part to the northern state of Borno, where more than 4,000 refugees were identified in 1990 (Passang et al., 1992:51). Some of these arrived after an initial stay in Cameroon; research uncovered a high degree of mobility characteristic of the itineraries of many Chadians in exile (Passang et al., 1992:30). Not all were installed

in camps, but instead settled spontaneously, in the midst of local populations, with whom they often shared ethnic as well as kinship ties in addition to the common bond of Islam. Such was the case in localities like Bama, Gambaro and Ngala. In the city of Maiduguri, on the other hand, some Chadian refugees were concentrated in a separate neighbourhood called "Rua", or "Camp of Hot Water". While the federal government of the state of Borno accepted the refugees, they considered them a supplemental burden on the state budget. Local authorities in rural and suburban areas, on the other hand, felt the Chadians contributed to economic development in their regions through the labour they provided in the largely agricultural zones of cereal production (Passang et al., 1992:50-52).

Of the first three countries receiving the majority of Chadian refugees, only Cameroon can be considered comparatively well off, ranked in the middle income range of developing countries. Its volume of assistance to refugees was seen to be correspondingly higher than that of the CAR or the Sudan, both of which belong to the lowest income group of countries, nearly as poor if not poorer than Chad and facing numerous problems in meeting the needs of their own populations, let alone assuming the burden of caring for destitute newcomers (Passang et al., 1992:31). In all three instances, aid furnished by the international community was vital in stimulating and sustaining programmes of assistance for refugees. And, according to the findings of the research team, the programmes of assistance that were most successful were those seeking to help the refugees become self-sustaining through the organization of collective productive activities.

In this regard, the programme at Poli-Faro in Cameroon is cited as the most positive example of aid to refugees. In this camp, the accent from the beginning was on encouraging self-sufficiency among the refugees. In 1985, for example, one year after the camp was established, free food distributions were halted as refugees were increasingly able to grow part of their own food and pay for the rest with the income from cotton production. Refugees at the camp were also expected to pay health costs and to repay the agricultural materials, which were given out to them on credit. Through the acquisition of new

experiences and the accumulation of capital made possible by the programme there, the refugees were better prepared to return to productive activities once back in Chad (Passang et al., 1992:31, 76).

This is in contrast to the passive mentality of dependence seen to have built up among refugees who were simply given food hand-outs and provided with other services, in this way becoming simple wards of international welfare, as seems to have been the case for refugees in camps in the Central African Republic. In the Central African camps established at Boubou and Fah, free food aid was distributed throughout and agricultural equipment was also furnished to the refugees for free. According to the research team, this led to a certain passivity and the development of a mentality of dependence among the refugees who grew used to external assistance and, in their own words, became "the spoiled children of UNHCR" (*les gatés de l'HCR*) (Passang et al., 1992:76). These basic differences in the assistance policies guiding programmes for refugees in the camps established in Cameroon and the Central African Republic were to have some repercussions on later processes of resettlement after the refugees returned to Chad.

The organization of labour within the co-operatives established at Poli-Faro was recalled with enthusiasm by the refugees themselves who cited the high level of technical support and advice they received there and the egalitarian way in which it was dispensed as a positive spur to development. As such, it was compared favourably to the type of training and development inputs they had known as producers in southern Chad:

> *The co-operatives were well organized at the camp, with advice furnished by five agricultural technicians and an agronomist named Ademadji. He was the one who supervised the establishment of the co-operatives, which occurred in the following manner. Groups of refugees who agreed to put down a deposit of from US$ 83 to US$ 167 per person were given agricultural equipment and inputs on credit. A management committee was then created with responsibility for managing the materials distributed to each individual. The agricultural technicians and the agronomist*

> *were responsible for the technical organization of labour concerning, for example, the distribution of fields, the use of fertilizer, the setting of dates for planting and the application of pesticides* (testimony of one refugee at Faro, in Passang et al., 1992:74).

Other significant factors contributing to the success of the camp at Poli-Faro in Cameroon may be ascribed more to the cultural vitality and social resourcefulness of the refugees themselves than to external inputs from agencies of assistance, though the character of the aid programme was important in encouraging such vitality to blossom. It has been suggested, for example, that the relatively high level of education and technical capacity that characterized many of the refugees from the rich cotton producing zone of southern Chad enabled them to integrate more easily into Cameroonian structures (Bearez and De Tavora, 1987:4). The research team also found that the refugees devoted much time and energy to preserving their cultural identities as they set about the task of organizing their communal life at the camp. This was done in a way that facilitated communication and minimized conflicts between individuals and groups. When first created to receive the first large influx of refugees, the camp resembled a “melting-pot”, where Chadians of all regional origins and ethnic affiliations found themselves mixed together. Little by little, however, a political and administrative order was established by the refugees which reflected the basic socio-cultural divisions of Chadian society and was patterned on the administrative divisions of the country. Two sectors were created — one for northerners and one for southerners, with a management committee responsible for daily affairs formed in each sector. Two representatives of each prefecture were chosen as members of the management committee, participating in three commissions established for matters related to health, education and agriculture. These commissions would examine problems raised by the refugees, submitting proposals to the management committees which would, in turn, consult and negotiate with camp authorities from UNHCR. Thus, communications within each group of refugees as well as between refugees and camp authorities were facilitated through structures of participation

devised by the refugees themselves (Passang et al., 1992:32-34).

It is not clear from the research findings whether refugee women were included as active participants in these management committees and commissions or whether they were limited to men. In view of the way in which pre-existing forms of social organization were recreated in the camps, the latter was most likely the case. However, the fact that Chadian refugees were able to participate at all in the creation of social order at the camp and have a say in decisions concerning the lives of all were two important factors contributing to the smooth running of the camp. That they chose to do so in such a manner as to reconstitute the social structures and patterns of activity of their home country was interpreted by the researchers as a sign of "sociological creativity" on the part of populations anxious to reassert their social identity.

While the establishment of separate sectors for "northerner" and "southerner" reflected the divisive and politicized nature of ethnic and religious differences in Chadian society, the research team found abundant examples of solidarity within each sector. These occurred as members of different sub-ethnic groups and social statuses found themselves drawn together through adversity and the common struggle for survival as well as through shared participation in the ceremonies of life so essential to the maintenance of a culture and society:

> *I had nothing to start up a garden. So a fellow from my region who was a nurse at the camp gave me 5,000 FCFA which enabled me to buy seeds* (refugee cited in Passang et al., 1992:33-34).

> *We all got together without distinction of opinion, religion or region, in the course of ceremonies such as baptisms and marriages. These were occasions for meetings of all Chadians from the "southern" sector* (refugee cited in Passang et al., 1992:33-34).

Fraternal ties even seemed on occasion to bind members of the two different sectors, as divisions based on religion, social prejudice and ethnocentrism broke down in favour of a budding

national sentiment forged through common suffering and a heightened sense of being "Chadian". As the refugees themselves recount (in Passang et al., 1992:34):

> *In the camp, there was much solidarity because we are all from the same country ... civil servants, former politicians, cantonal chiefs and peasants who had all felt their lives menaced have regained confidence thanks to mutual aid and shared joys and sufferings.*
>
> *The fact of being able to feel "at home" helped us withstand the difficulties of exile. For sometimes the local populations threatened us, preventing us from drawing water from a well, for example. They referred to us as "strangers".*
>
> *Fraternity reigned; this was especially true among Muslims, Christians and animists.*
>
> *At the camp, a cordiality and solidarity in the face of all challenges existed among all social strata. All the ethnic groups of Chad were represented in the camp and they all considered themselves as part of a single family.*
>
> *In spite of the mixture of ethnic groups, there was harmony among us at the camp*.

As in many urban migrant situations, the camps provided an expanded environment in which to meet and get to know members of different groups, contributing to the breakdown of social barriers. One woman refugee attributes her marriage to a man from outside of her own group to her refugee experience:

> *I met my current husband in exile. He's not from my village, but on return I married him* (testimony of Mme Ma, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:61-62).

Thus, while uprootedness in and of itself was a traumatic and sorrowful phenomenon, certain positive changes arose through the experience of exile of at least some Chadian refugees. As in many accounts of other migrant experiences, heightened solidarity, expanded horizons and the opportunity to learn and engage in new productive techniques were highlights of the most successful camps established for the exiles. However, not all

refugees were fortunate enough to participate in such a highly organized camp structure. At the same time, even this most positive camp experience reflected the power of some of the most basic divisive characteristics of Chadian society, foreshadowing the persistence of problems to be faced in the subsequent drive towards national unification. But what of the specific experiences of women, both within such camps and among those spontaneously settled among local populations?

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

Refugee women, whether in camps or in spontaneous settlements among local populations, engaged in a variety of economic activities to ensure their survival and that of their families. In this, they demonstrated both resourcefulness and courage in adapting to changed situations and assuming new responsibilities. Some women spontaneously settled described foraging for roots, collecting wild fruits and berries, digging up termite mounds to gather the grains stored within, or begging in a desperate attempt to feed their families. Many in camps spoke of engaging in petty trade; some learned new skills; many performed tasks they would never have imagined before exile and found their lives transformed by the experience.

> *In Kousseri, before UNHCR came to our assistance, I had many activities, but the most important one was the sale of fire wood. Afterwards, my son in Gambaro [Nigeria] sent for me and there I traded in sugar and learned how to prepare alcoholic beverages for sale* (testimony No. 1, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:87).

Some women lucky enough to find refuge in camps found the food rations insufficient or inappropriate and resorted to all sorts of strategies to supplement them. This was particularly the case in the later stages of camp life when many assistance programmes followed a policy of progressively cutting back on the distribution of foodstuffs in efforts to promote greater self-sufficiency among the refugees. Many women who arrived late at the camps seemed to have missed out on rations altogether. This

seemed to be particularly the case for camps in the Sudan, where initial food distributions could not keep up with the growing numbers of drought and famine-stricken refugees from eastern Chad.

> *In the camp [in CAR], UNHCR helped us a lot and, in addition, I made* bili-bili*, which brought in more money at first. It is thus that I had the time to give birth to my third child. UNHCR distributed sardines. Since in Chad we were used to sauces made of meat or fish, I was obliged to sell some of the foodstuffs distributed on the market of Boudayo. Sometimes, in order to buy clothes for the children, I sold the oil or sardines. Sometimes, local people would come to the camp to sell us certain items* (testimony No. 2, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:88)*.*
>
> *I was one of the last refugees to arrive [in Poli-Faro] and aid was drying up at the camp. We even had to pay for certain foodstuffs. So I took up petty commerce. I made fried doughnuts and peanut cakes which I sold* (testimony No. 7, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:93).
>
> *And so I followed the others as far as Ndouki in the Sudan. For two months, there was nothing and it was only afterwards that the foreigners came to take us to the camp at Assirni. There we were assisted, but, as the numbers were growing steadily and food was becoming rare, I was forced to go into the bush to search for firewood to sell. The money I earned allowed me to survive while waiting for the rations. Then, some time afterwards, they decided to take us somewhere else. That's when I fled the camp to return* (testimony No. 14, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:100-101).
>
> *At El Geneina [in the Sudan] we were assisted at first, but as the numbers of refugees rose, the assistance diminished. So, in order to survive, I became a water carrier. I would carry a large jug on my head and travel far in search of water. The contents of the jug would sell for one farada which was about 10 FCFA [roughly 3 US cents]. Life was so difficult that one of my children died*

> *there* (testimony of Mme Hal, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:30).

Elsewhere, women expressed such satisfaction with the aid received in camps that they regretted leaving when the time came to return (see chapter 4). In many cases, especially for some of the rural refugees, medical care was better than what they had been used to at home; some children benefited from schooling; and, in addition to food aid, some refugees were given assistance to take up farming activities. In the camps established in the Central African Republic, medical care was provided by the organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which also ran health and hygiene education programmes for the refugees and employed some refugees as assistants. Similar assistance was available in camps in Cameroon:

> *We took refuge in Daya [CAR], where my son followed an apprentice training course given by MSF. We were well assisted in the camp and since my son worked in the clinic, I received good treatment for the slightest problem. Life in the camp was good, but that did not stop me from cultivating my own little plot of beans* (testimony No. 4, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:90).

> *In December 1985, a vaccination campaign was started up, with vaccines supplied by the health services of the Central African Republic against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and measles as well as BCG for children under five and pregnant women* (testimony of Mme Ko, nurse at the dispensary of Maro in Moyen-Chari, refugee in Sido, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:34).

> *In the camp [Poli-Faro], aside from the nightmare of my husband's death, I didn't have many problems. We were aided, my children received medical attention and went to school. Myself, I cultivated a field of groundnuts and maize, I prepared* bili-bili *and fried doughnuts that sold well. I even bought a little machine to grind the groundnuts* (testimony No. 8, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:94).

Some of the women professionals who found themselves in exile were able to employ their skills in the camps, working as nurses, teachers and social workers on various assistance programmes established in the camps. This seems to be especially the case for the camp at Kousseri, Cameroon, where a good proportion of refugees from N'Djaména were of the professional classes. Skilled Chadian women were also employed as teachers in the special schools set up for Chadian children in camps in the Central African Republic (see inset 2). Even in the Sudan, where programmes of assistance seemed the weakest, some Chadian women successfully managed to apply their skills, contributing to the education, for example, of local children, as in the following case:

> *In exile, one of my wives found [domestic] work at the home of a rich Sudanese, while the other taught Arabic and French to his children. The latter was such a success that other Sudanese families sent their children to her to learn French* (testimony of Mr Ali, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:36).

The development assistance provided in combination with the high quality of social services available was particularly appreciated in the camp at Poli-Faro where the cultivation of cotton provided the refugees with an independent income that allowed them to live more comfortably in the camp and even to procure luxury items, as well as to build up assets for the eventual return to Chad. As the following women recount:

> *In the camp [at Poli-Faro], I was considered the head of household and thus I was the one who received the family's rations. I also had a field of cotton and groundnuts. The sale of cotton allowed me to buy dishes and other things. I learned how to farm with the* daba *[short-handled hoe] in the camp — it was difficult at first because I wasn't used to it. Really, life in the camp was good* (testimony of Mme Yo, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:28).
>
> *We had a field in the camp [at Poli-Faro] for cotton, the sale of which enabled us to buy household necessities such as furniture, clothes ... Because for food, the UNHCR*

> *helped us enormously. I gave birth to a child who was sickly, but thanks to the European nurses, he got better* (testimony of Mme Log, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:28).
>
> *We had left everything behind in flight and thus in the camp [at Poli-Faro], UNHCR gave us everything — cups, plates, soap, food. We also had our field of cotton. Proceeds from the sale of the cotton allowed my husband to buy himself a radio set, which we had never had before exile* (testimony of Mme Lo, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:29).

At the same time, however, the testimonies of other women returning from Poli-Faro indicate that men and women may have been differentially integrated into the main economic activity of cotton production in the camp. Some women attest to performing a variety of income generating activities at the camp and speak of cultivating crops other than cotton, such as maize for food and groundnuts for both food and sale. Such a situation reflects a common gendered division of labour characteristic of the south of Chad and elsewhere whereby men are in charge of the chief cash crops while women provide labour on the men's fields and perform other tasks essential to household survival:

> *In addition to the assistance received, I would go into the bush to look for tubers, partly to eat and partly to sell* (testimony No. 6, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:92).

The grafting of camp policy in this way onto such a statically conceived form of gender relations may have been seriously out of step with the real situation in which many women found themselves as single heads of household in the wake of family rupture. Research in other African countries suggests that female-headed households among refugees remain "an ignored population", with the implication that their specific needs are not being met by assistance programmes (Apeadu, 1993). Nevertheless, whether or not women were responsible for cotton production or other economic activities at the camp in Poli-Faro, on the whole families there were able to attain a high degree of economic well-being. Economic conditions seemed somewhat less satisfactory for women in camps organized in the Central African Republic, where, for a combination of reasons including

soil conditions and the availability of seeds, agricultural activities were limited to food crops, which brought in less revenue than cotton and were not the same as food crops in Chad. Furthermore, the technical level for the performance of agricultural activities was often lower than what the refugees were used to in the cotton zone at home and the tools different from what they were accustomed to:

Inset 2 — Education in exile: Hard choices for Chadian students

According to the investigations led by the INSH team, children of refugees spontaneously settled among local populations were not accepted at local schools and thus saw their education grind to a halt. The luckier ones in camps in Cameroon and the Central African Republic attended primary schools established for them by UNHCR and other international agencies and NGOs. In the Central African Republic, for example, the French agency Volunteers for Progress assisted in building a school which employed trained Chadian teachers among the refugees. These teachers taught lessons designed to correspond to the basic Chadian curriculum so as not to disrupt the continuity of the children's education (case of Mme Klah, cited in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:36-37).

The situation for secondary education was more complex. Pupils who had not yet reached the third year of secondary school were not accepted in national schools of the host country and, because humanitarian aid concentrated on the primary levels, no secondary schooling was provided in the camps. Pupils who found themselves in this situation were faced with the choice of abandoning their schooling altogether, or returning at their risk to Chad to find out if schools were still functioning in their regions. Many children chose this second alternative, going off to live with family members or friends who had remained behind.

For pupils who had reached at least the third year of secondary school, a test was administered to determine their aptitude for admission into the higher grades. Those lucky enough to pass this test successfully received a UNHCR scholarship of 25,000-30,000 FCFA (roughly US$ 83-100). Those who failed were forced to choose between returning to Chad or following a professional training course. Many chose the latter option, entering technical training programmes and obtaining certificates of aptitude as well-diggers, laboratory assistants, nurses' aides and the like, which permitted them to work in the countries of refuge. Unfortunately, such certificates were not always recognized back in Chad; nor were the significant work experiences gained in exile.

/...

High school graduates were also subjected to an aptitude test, with those who passed receiving a UNHCR scholarship of from 50,000 to 80,000 FCFA (roughly US$ 167-267) for university schooling, depending on the cost of living in the host country. Between April 1981 and April 1985, according to one United Nations report referred to by Nodjal and Passang (1992:35), UNHCR provided 44 secondary level scholarships and 50 higher level scholarships to Chadians in exile. However, when new policy orientations aimed at fostering economic self-sufficiency among refugee populations shifted the focus of aid to the provision of financial credits to adults for the acquisition of means of production within the camps, UNHCR apparently phased out its provision of scholarships to Chadian students.

Even for students lucky enough to be awarded scholarships, language problems often hindered their education in exile. In contrast to Chad, where French served as the primary language of instruction (with Arabic of secondary importance in some bilingual schools), neighbouring countries had diverse language policies, with English used as the official medium of instruction in Nigeria and Arabic in the Sudan. So, too, in the Central African Republic, where French is the official language of instruction, lessons were often transmitted in the local language of Sango (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:34-37; and Passang et al., 1992:31).

Educational difficulties continued to pose challenges to Chadian children and youths on their return to Chad. Formal schooling had ground to a halt in many regions where schools had been destroyed or looted and trained personnel had taken flight. While some had been replaced with “spontaneous schools” created by associations of parents anxious to minimize the disruption in their children’s education, conditions remained grim. The National Committee for the Reception of Refugees (CNAR) issued directives to all existing educational establishments to admit returning refugee children on the basis of certificates issued in schools set up in camps. But for those children who had not received scholarships or who had lived in exile unassisted, the precious years of lost schooling would never be recovered (Passang et al., 1992:72).

> *Myself, I opted for the camp [in Sido], for I didn't foresee any immediate end to the hostilities. In the camp, I had a hoe, a machete and a* coupe-coupe *[cutting instrument] which enabled me to farm a field. Groundnuts didn't grow very well at the sites chosen for the camps, though the soil was suitable for beans. But engaging in such agricultural activities at the camp did not really enable us to live better for two reasons. The ground was very wet and thus not suitable for the variety of crops we were used to in Chad, such as sorghum and groundnuts. Furthermore, we were used to draught agriculture. The tools they distributed to us were not the same as the ones we have at home. Take the hoe, for example: we are accustomed to crouching down while using it, but the ones they gave us called for work standing up, which took some time to get used to. Sometimes we gave our hoes to refugees who were blacksmiths so that they could remodel them for us* (testimony of Mme Klah, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:30).

The conditions of life for women in refugee camps in the Sudan seemed harder, on the whole, than those in either Cameroon or the Central African Republic. In the Sudan, according to the findings of the research team, women and children living in the camps were open to exploitation by Sudanese who employed them as labourers on the private agricultural co-operatives established outside of the camps. Under such conditions, land was not attributed to the refugees to farm on their own, as in the CAR or Cameroon. Women and children would leave the camps each morning to work on the co-operatives or to look for other jobs that would enable them to survive. Such jobs were almost exclusively low-paying ones demanding little or no technical skill within the "informal" sector where women could apply the labour they were accustomed to in their own household economies. Such experiences in camps did not differ all that much from the experiences of women who had settled unassisted among local populations. In both cases, as the following testimonies reveal, a woman refugee may be particularly vulnerable in the labour market of the host country since the disadvantages of her refugee status are compounded by her status as female:

> *We followed the others as far as Assirni, in the Sudan. At first we were assisted, but then the Sudanese diverted our foodstuffs. I was forced to leave the camp early each morning to go look for work in the homes of rich Sudanese* (testimony of Mme Wal, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:31).
>
> *I got myself hired as a labourer on the fields of some rich Sudanese who lodged me, nourished me and gave me a little money for salt and other condiments, as well as clothes. They fed us well, which persuaded me to stay and work hard. If the work finished or no longer interested me, I would change bosses. The work instruments were the same as ours, that is to say the* daba *and hoe. As I had been abandoned by my husband and life was becoming harder and harder in the Sudan, my mother sent someone looking for me. That's why I returned. I was very unhappy in the Sudan. In addition to working on other people's fields, I ground grain, which wasn't profitable at all. I also had another problem. They gave us cakes in which they had put preservatives that made us sick. It gave us constipation. Then, I dug up termite mounds to find the grains that were stored there* (testimony No. 15, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:101-102).
>
> *I worked in my boss's fields. At harvest time, the products were shared out and I would normally receive a third. Sometimes, however, I received nothing because I had been given left-over food while I was working* (testimony of Mme Zen in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:39).
>
> *Exile forced me to become a water-carrier because in the Sudan, Chadians who had fled were not supposed to have their own personal fields. I would go far in search of water that I would sell for almost nothing. Sometimes they would give me a receipt for later payment, but when I tried to collect on it, they would insult me* (testimony of Mme K, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:39).

As women everywhere adapted to different agricultural conditions, so they were forced to adapt to different food sources and learn new techniques of preparation. Women in exile in

Cameroon, for example, learned how to prepare yams, while those in the Sudan were forced to adapt to sorghum:

> *Productivity was mediocre. We cultivated sorghum, whereas we preferred millet. But hunger forced us to adapt ourselves* (testimony of Mme Hal, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:37).

> *It was hard at first to get used to Sudanese food. Our staple food is millet, but in Souki I was obliged to eat sorghum, which gave me stomach aches for a while* (testimony of Mme Zen, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:38).

While such processes of adaptation did not take place without certain difficulties, the research team noted that, once adopted, the new dietary practices became anchored in the habits of refugee populations, persisting even after their return to Chad. This led the team to question certain theses — that of de Garine (1979), for example — that posit diet as one of the most enduring and resistant characteristics of a culture. In the refugee context, it seems, when one's very survival depends on being adaptive, dietary practices may be more easily changed than might otherwise be expected (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:37-38; and Passang et al., 1992:77-78).

The experiences of some women showed up certain inadequacies in some of the official assistance policies of UNHCR, especially those that did not take full account of the complexity of women's socio-cultural realities. This was particularly the case in situations of polygyny, as it seemed the policy of UNHCR was to consider as "legitimate" only one wife per male "head of household". This often led to intensification of jealousies and conflict between co-wives and left the door open for neglect of the needs of the wife less favoured by the husband:

> *We took refuge in Sido [village in the CAR] and were then taken to Fali [camp in the CAR]. There, UNHCR helped us a lot. In addition to their assistance, I prepared* bili-bili *and I helped my husband in the fields. But I had one problem, which was that my "rival" [co-wife] was very jealous, a condition aggravated by the constraints of exile which obliged us to live together in the same tent. She made my*

> *life very difficult and said that I was the one who had brought bad luck to their household since it was after my marriage that all the troubles started ... I was forced to work my own field because of my rival, but UNHCR refused to give me working materials because they only take into consideration the head of the household* (testimony No. 3, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:89).

The same potential for increased conflicts between co-wives was also ever-present among polygynous couples attempting to survive on their own, without the benefit of assistance programmes. Conflicts were equally on the rise within monogamous households, with many women recounting problems of desertion and abandonment by their husbands during this period. As the web of customary social relations and reciprocal obligations that normally bound members of households together in culturally approved arrangements were stretched and torn through social upheaval, social sanctions on irresponsible behaviour broke down, as did traditional social security systems guaranteeing protection to some of the most vulnerable members of society. Without any external assistance whatsoever and left alone to take care of their families, many women courageously took on new responsibilities and resourcefully met the challenges of survival. This is especially evident from the testimonies of Sahelian women fleeing drought and famine:

> *With the drought of 1984, my husband took my "rival" [co-wife] and fled to the Sudan. I was forced to follow them with the children. But once in the Sudan, I was not able to find my husband. I fed my children with wild fruits* (mikhète) (testimony No. 15, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:101).

> *In 1984, my husband and children and I fled to take refuge in the Sudan. In the morning, my husband would go off to look for firewood and I would go from house to house looking for work grinding grain and ready to take on any other sort of labour. At night we would return to our miserable shelter where our starving children waited for us. Then one day my husband, who had gone to look for*

> *firewood, never came back. After four months of waiting in vain, I took the children and returned home* (testimony No. 13, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:100).
>
> *In 1984, following the famine, we were forced to leave Ambsibekha [Ouaddaï] to go to the Sudan to look for food. All of our cattle had perished. Once in the Sudan, nothing worked. I pretended to be blind in order to have at least a little bit of left-over* boule *[typical Chadian staple dish, a dough made of millet or sorghum] for my last two children. Sometimes I would return with empty hands to the little corner in the bush that served as our shelter. One day, when I returned with my cup filled with rotten porridge, I found my second youngest child dead there where I had left him when I went off to beg. It was difficult to find a place to bury him. My husband had continued on to another village to see if he could find a bit of food. Thus I buried the child alone. Afterwards, I lost the last one too in the absence of my husband. My older children (aged seven to ten) worked in the homes of Sudanese as "boys" [domestic workers]* (testimony No. 12, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:99).

Some women from the south who sought refuge in the Central African Republic also remained in border villages without assistance rather than proceeding on to organized camps and faced equally difficult conditions of survival:

> *We fled by following the Chari River. Many children perished or were abandoned along the route. We stayed in the bush for three months. The village we finally reached was in the territory of the Central African Republic. There, we had a problem of water. The local people were hostile and we kept to the outskirts of the village for three more months ... All that time in the bush, we had kept ourselves alive with roots and wild fruits* (testimony No. 10, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:96).
>
> *In the country where we sought refuge [CAR], we suffered terribly — no house, no food, almost everyone was sick.*

> *Children were dying day by day* (testimony No. 9, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:95).

Such women, faced with tremendous hardship and burdened with continuing sorrow, were somehow able to draw on internal resources to enable them to rise to the challenges of survival on their own. Other women, traumatized by their losses and often weakened by hunger and ill-health, seemed to abandon hope, sinking into a lassitude and despair that was especially evident among women in camps. There, although material needs may have been well attended to, psychological problems were less easily treated and permanent manifestations of trauma and stress could arise:

> *The long walk and the difficulties we encountered along the way completely destroyed me and so in the camp [Poli-Faro] I didn't farm at all* (testimony No. 6, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:92).

> *In the camp at Sido [CAR], I didn't feel up to anything. If I had still been able to retain the illusion of recovering my possessions, like some of the others, it would have been better, but my case was different. I drank, that's why. I, who never used to drink, started drinking alcohol in the camp and have continued up to now* (testimony No. 5, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:91).

It is clearly apparent from such testimonies that, as dramatic as many of the physical manifestations of uprootedness were on the lives of the populations who suffered them, the psychological effects could be equally damaging. According to the research team, the trauma suffered during the violence and destruction of livelihoods has left indelible marks on the population, with more evidence of deranged individuals wandering on the streets of Chad today than was ever the case before the "events" (Passang et al., 1992:26). Stress took its toll on all segments of the population. For example, children forced to witness death and destruction all around them would never be the same, as memories of war and famine remained vivid in their minds (as per interviews with children of war in UNICEF, 1990:92-93). And women suffered doubly for themselves and for their lost or

suffering family members. While those lucky enough to find refuge in camps were assisted in their efforts to survive, in the concern to satisfy the immediate physical needs of the refugees, "one often forgets that women also have unsatisfied emotional needs: from the effects of trauma and stress, the loss of control over their personal lives, concerns for their children's future, sorrow at having lost or left loved ones" (**N'Djaména Hebdo**, 1991:13, cited in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:46).

CONCLUSION

As the research team's findings indicate and as the testimonies of the refugees themselves attest, experiences of flight and exile were multiple and varied for the thousands of Chadians who suffered uprootedness from their homes during this troubled period of Chad's history. Certain basic features were of course common to the refugee situation as such. These included heightened stress, insecurity, trauma and loss. However, both the nature of flight and the conditions encountered in exile differed significantly from one refugee to another. The suddenness of flight from zones of violent confrontation contrasted in general with the more gradual decision to leave regions struck by the inexorable advance of drought-induced famine. Some families left their home regions en bloc according to carefully worked out plans, such as the nomadic group whose decision to move west was taken at a community council. Other families split apart, either as part of a strategy of survival, as a result of violence, or due to the breakdown in social ties. Once in exile, the experiences of those assisted within camps often differed significantly from the experiences of those who attempted to survive on their own amidst local populations, with further distinctions apparent according to the country of exile, the particular type of programme of assistance available and the gender of the refugee. In the following chapter we will explore the equally diverse factors conditioning the return of refugees to their regions of origin and analyse the circumstances under which such returns were effected.

4

COMING HOME
RISKING THE RETURN

Whatever the experiences of refugees in exile, most shared a desire to return to their homes as soon as possible to begin to pick up the pieces of shattered lives. Given conditions of continuing insecurity, however, coupled with the devastation that had been wreaked in many parts of Chad during their absence, the decision to return was not always an easy one. Refugees had to weigh the ever-present desire to regain their homes against the hardships and possible dangers such a move would entail. How did they make the decision to return? And what obstacles did they have to overcome along the way? Various structures of assistance were established to facilitate the return of officially recognized refugees to Chad and to aid in their resettlement after arrival. Other Chadians, on the other hand, undertook the voyage of return and faced the process of resettlement on their own, without public assistance. How did the experiences of these two groups of refugee returnees differ and what can be learned from the difficulties encountered? Did women face particular problems during the arduous processes involved in repatriation and were their needs met through formal programmes of assistance?

PAVING THE WAY: PROCESSES OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION

The prerequisite for a mass return of refugees to Chad was reconciliation among the warring factions and the creation of stable political and administrative structures capable of guaranteeing public order and guiding efforts aimed at reconstructing the shattered country. But the process of political reconciliation was a long and checkered one, with successive agreements for cease-fires and attempts to re-establish some semblance of a governing body constantly disrupted by renewed conflict and turmoil.

The conferences of Lagos and Kano in March and August of 1979 prepared the ground for reconciliation through the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT) and arrangements for a cease-fire. After renewed fighting in the capital was put down by GUNT forces in 1980, a process of disarmament was launched and at least temporary peace seemed to have been attained. The first legislative act concerning refugees was enacted by GUNT in 1981, marking Chad's adherence to the 1951 Geneva Convention relative to the status of refugees. Henceforward, irrespective of age, sex and political conviction, Chadians in exile were to be recognized as refugees and legally guaranteed the protection such a status confers as the GUNT decreed a general amnesty for all Chadians in exile. The effect was immediate. By mid-1981, around 150,000 Chadians had returned to their home regions. The creation by the government of the National Committee for the Reception of Refugees (CNAR) in July 1981 facilitated this first wave of returns and the committee was to remain the principal structure charged with co-ordinating refugee returns thereafter (Passang et al., 1992:37).

After Habré took power in 1982, the first measure concerning refugees was contained in Decree No. 009/PR of 16 June, granting a total general amnesty to prisoners, exiles and political refugees as well as to those still in revolt within the country. A clause apt to create some doubts in the minds of potential beneficiaries had nevertheless been slipped into this decree

which stipulated that "the infractions granted amnesty are those qualifying as offenses and transgressions committed between 7 June 1982 and 7 June 1983 with the exception of those constituting a breach of honesty, good behaviour or attacks on the honour of delinquents" (Passang et al., 1992:55). Issued on the eve of confrontations between the National Armed Forces of Chad and the other armed forces of the opposition, the decree was never put into force (Passang et al., 1992:37).

A national reconciliation conference held in Brazzaville succeeded for the first time in bringing together the government of N'Djaména and members of the various opposition movements. While the conference stimulated much hope, however, its outcome remained ineffective. The Libreville conference of 1985 also brought together some members of the opposition, namely the Committee for Co-ordination and Action of the Democratic and Revolutionary Committee (CAC/CDR) which concluded accords with the government. Two days afterwards, on 13 November 1985, a national decree was issued which repeated points 2 and 4 of the CAC/CDR text concerning the "proclamation of a general amnesty for all refugees and political exiles" and insisting on the importance of developing a strategy capable of "encouraging and facilitating the return of Chadians to their country with guarantees for their persons and goods" (Agence Tchadienne de Presse, 1985:9-13, cited in Passang et al., 1992:38). At the same time, the opposition parties demanded the immediate liberation of all political detainees and prisoners of war. The decree had important repercussions for those refugees who had gone into exile because of a fear of persecution on the basis of political opinion and, according to estimates of CNAR, it paved the way for the return of some 260,000 refugees in that year (INSH, 1990:16, cited in Passang et al., 1992:38).

The year 1985 also saw the signing of an accord between the government of Chad and the armed resistance in the south, with former *codos* integrated into the national army, or FANT. In 1986, remaining groups of *codos* in the south-east of Chad also signed an accord with the central government, bringing about a gradual return to peace in the south. This was followed by accords with two opposition movements headed by former army commanders operating from outside the country, the Revolutionary Movement

of the Chadian People (MRPT) and the Democratic Front of Chad (FDT). Other important accords signed in 1988 and 1989 with the exiled Democratic Revolutionary Committee (CDR) under Acheik Ibn Oumar and the first army of the provisional action committee of FROLINAT (CAC) headed by Ali Mahamat Zene Fadoul (Passang et al., 1992:38-39).

The mediation of African countries and of particular African leaders played a significant role throughout the process of reconciliation. Panafrican efforts to find a solution to the Chadian conflict had intensified after the 24th summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1984 when it was decided to create an *ad hoc* committee to reconcile differences within Chad and to bring about a peaceful solution to the differences between Chad and Libya (resolution AHG/RES/17/4/XXIV of OAU, in **Al Watan**, 1988:6, cited in Passang et al., 1992:38). Countries that had received Chadian refugees — such as Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and the Sudan, as well as Algeria, Benin, Congo, Morocco, Togo and Tunisia, and, outside of Africa, Iraq — encouraged and facilitated meetings among the parties in conflict. The president of Gabon played a significant role in preparing the conference of Libreville; Iraq facilitated the accord between the Chadian government and Acheik Ibn Oumar of the CDR in 1988; the Togolese president mediated conflicts among Chadian parties and helped restore dialogue between N'Djaména and Tripoli. Morocco served as the site for the first encounter between Qaddafi and Habré in 1989, while Algeria favoured the cease-fire accord and the decision to seek a peaceful resolution to the territorial conflict between Chad and Libya. The Malian president also intervened to organize the summit in Bamako in July 1989 at which Chadian and Libyan authorities were brought together. Partly as a result of such mediations, the contentious issue of the Aouzou Strip was brought before the International Court of Justice in 1990 (Passang et al., 1992:39).

The culminating point of the process of reconciliation came with the entry into law, through a vote by universal suffrage, of the constitution on 10 December 1989, the most significant legislative act since the previous constitution was disbanded in 1975. Chadians, both within the country and outside, perceived the proclamation of the constitution as the opening of a new era of

democracy, taking to heart its opening preamble guaranteeing "respect for the values and principles of justice, equality, liberty and peace" as contained in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Articles 38 and 40 of the constitution further guaranteed the fundamental liberties and rights of opinion, association and press that had been denied to Chadians for so long (Passang et al., 1992:39).

The progressive adhesion of oppositional movements to Habré's régime throughout this period contributed to a climate of confidence favouring the return of refugees. Concrete actions manifesting the good intentions of national leaders coupled with good will missions sent out to those in exile convinced many of the political refugees to return. At the same time, war prisoners of the different political-military organizations were liberated, as stipulated in the accords, thus augmenting the flow of returns. The policy practiced by UNHCR of progressively cutting back on the distribution of free foodstuffs within camps, where refugees were instead encouraged to become self-sufficient through the formation of co-operatives, was also found to be conducive to refugee returns, as refugees were in this manner both prepared and motivated to take up productive activities in their home country once again. This was found to be the case, for example, for the refugees in the camp of Poli-Faro in Cameroon. Food distributions in the drought-stricken Sahelian zones within Chad also exerted a significant pull factor.

Under the combined influence of such policies and favourable political factors, the process of repatriation took place over several periods between 1981 and 1990. Between 1981 and 1984, an estimated 163,000 refugees returned to Chad from the camp at Kousseri, in Cameroon; from Nigeria and, to a lesser extent, from the Sudan (CARE-Tchad, 1983:2, cited in Passang et al., 1992:40). The majority settled in and around N'Djaména. Some returned to the homes they had left in the capital prior to exile. Others used the capital as a temporary transit point — some awaiting clarification of security conditions in other parts of the country, others the return of the rains in the Sahelian zone. These returnees were joined by thousands of internally displaced people who flocked to N'Djaména at this time. While an estimated

5,000 refugees returning from the Sudan resettled in their regions of origin in the prefectures of Ouaddaï and Biltine around Abéché, Adré and Guéréda, others were fleeing the effects of drought; refugees and displaced populations mingled during this time of upheaval in the region. Thereafter, the rains of 1985 and 1986 returned with a vengeance, washing out roads and slowing down the process of repatriation and resettlement.

As the political situation settled and the rains returned to normal, the period from 1986 to 1987 witnessed the largest number of repatriations registered by CNAR when an estimated 280,000 returned from Cameroon, the CAR, Nigeria and the Sudan. Thereafter, the numbers of returnees progressively diminished, with CNAR recording 26,470 between 1988 and 1990. Refugees returning in this period resettled in the south (Moyen-Chari, Logone-Oriental, Logone-Occidental) and the east (Ouaddaï and Biltine). The total number of returnees registered by CNAR between 1984 and 1990 was 311,300. This figure, however, excludes the huge wave of returns from Kousseri between 1981 and 1983, as well as significant numbers of unregistered returnees (Passang et al., 1992:41).

THE DECISION TO RETURN

However well the material needs of refugees may have been provided for through programmes of assistance established in organized camps, or however much the existence of common ethnic bonds may have alleviated the strain of acceptance by local populations in some cases, the desire to return to the home country, where one was no longer a stranger but surrounded by family and friends and able to engage in familiar activities in a familiar environment, was an ever-present force in the minds and hearts of most Chadian refugees. The refugee situation was inherently one of alienation. Attached to the condition of exile was a plethora of sources of frustration and humiliation. Treated as strangers and frequently the objects of xenophobia, the refugees were most often set apart from local inhabitants in the different countries of refuge. Whether gathered together in camps where movements were restricted and visits from outsiders strictly

regulated or prohibited, or dispersed in small clusters in villages, cities or rural areas, the thousands of Chadians displaced by social turmoil and environmental collapse never felt totally at home in exile. As one woman from eastern Chad described the alienation of exile in the Sudan:

> *In Souki [Sudan], those of us who had fled the famine were always humiliated. When we were sick, for example, we were refused treatment at the hospital ... For example, I was obliged to treat myself with wild roots. We were expelled from the little village we Chadians had constructed outside of the town, we never had enough to eat, and too little was paid for our labour, which was so highly praised; that is what motivated us to return to our country* (Mme Zen, cited in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:39).

At the same time, however, lingering fears of unsettled conditions in Chad, coupled in many instances with the absence of resources necessary to re-establish themselves in a devastated home country contributed to hesitation on the part of many refugees to return. Some refugees, particularly among the women, seemed reluctant to leave the security of the camp situation — especially one as well organized as that of Poli-Faro in Cameroon — for the uncertainties of a return to greater hardship in Chad. Waiting and watching, the refugees in exile were ever on the alert for news of their country and more particularly of the family and friends they had left behind (Passang et al., 1992:55).

The research team found that, just as a multitude of factors conditioned the decision to return to Chad, so numerous sources of information were taken into consideration as refugees weighed the advantages and disadvantages of such a decision. These, moreover, varied by region and from individual to individual, depending largely on the circumstances in exile. For example, among those refugees in Nigeria who were living scattered among local inhabitants, as well as among refugees in the Sudan where open camp policies permitted visitors, friends from home, family members, merchants, truck drivers and other travellers were the most important sources of news (Passang et al., 1992:46). Refugees in closed camps such as Poli-Faro in

Cameroon, or those settled in isolated areas in the Central African Republic were more likely to depend on news brought from official emissaries from Chad sent to negotiate the return of village leaders and cantonal chiefs, supplemented with information provided by UNHCR authorities and news reported on the radio. Even in these cases, however, confirmation was normally sought through more informal sources of information, as refugees invariably placed more confidence in such channels than in the official pronouncements by UNHCR and other authorities. At Poli-Faro, for example, much resourcefulness was displayed by refugees seeking reliable information and sending secret emissaries to Chad to report back on conditions there:

> *We got together to pay the travel costs of someone chosen from our group to go to Kousseri; he would persuade a Nigerian truck driver to take him on as an apprentice driver for the trip to Chad. He would thus be able to cross the border without being bothered by the border police and would maintain his disguise for up to two weeks while he took stock of the situation and gathered reliable news to bring back to us. This was the only sure way to verify rumours and cross-check the news in the press and on the radio* (Passang et al., 1992:46).

After such news of conditions in Chad was gathered, the process of decision-making began. Decisions would be made either individually or through the influence of heads of clan or village chiefs, religious authorities, teachers or leaders of opposition groups. For refugees in organized camps, individuals who had risen to importance in the organization of camp life would frequently serve as the liaison between the refugees and camp authorities. For women refugees who had fled with their husbands or other male family members acting as nominal heads of household, the decision to return was usually linked to the men's. This is because in the customary framework of household decision-making, women are often denied an independent voice, a condition against which some of them courageously struggled, but which others accepted with a sort of fatalism bred of powerlessness. As Mme Mou, widow and mother of eight,

remarked on her return from a refugee camp in the Central African Republic:

> *Life in the camp was good ... Then, in 1987, I don't know why, my son decided we should return* (testimony No. 4, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:90).

For women living in refugee camps without male family support, decisions were usually made according to the suggestions and advice of the refugee committees that had been established, with women sometimes going along reluctantly with the majority decision to return simply for lack of any clear alternatives. This was evidently the case of two southern women returning to their villages from the camp at Poli-Faro in Cameroon:

> *I came back because the others decided to. But I greatly regret it. In the camp, we were aided, but here we have nothing* (testimony No. 6 in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:92).

> *Then everyone in the camp decided to come back. Me, I didn't want to because of the great emptiness I would find — no husband and all my goods pillaged. But I couldn't stay in the camp alone, so I returned with the others* (testimony No. 8, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:94).

Other women took decisions into their own hands, such as Mme Kou, divorced and mother of three, who fled back to Chad from the Sudanese refugee camp in Assirni when authorities decided to move them to another location farther from home. Explaining her decision, she states:

> *What pushed me to return was the thought of my old parents who had stayed behind. We were also informed by travellers passing through that food had become abundant in Chad. I came back on foot* (testimony No. 14, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:101).

Women who had fled the drought in eastern Chad but who had settled without formal structures of support among local populations in both rural and urban zones would also base the decision to return on the nature of the news filtering through to them from Chad — sometimes from family members — or on the

example of others in the same condition. As above, news of food distributions taking place back home provided one of the most powerful spurs for the decision to return. Some women ventured the return trip as soon as their material condition allowed; others left when conditions in exile deteriorated to such an extent as to become intolerable; others, fearful, lost and alone, lingered on in their country of refuge until the way back was paved through concrete offers of assistance. Mme Haw, mother of six and separated from her husband during the social dislocations caused by drought, explains the circumstances of her eventual return to eastern Chad:

> *I wanted to come back to die in my country, but I didn't know the way back. Then one day a messenger from SECADEV [a national NGO] travelled through all of the border villages to convince people to come back. I was among the first to return and because of that I benefited from a lot of aid in comparison with my other friends who came back later* (testimony No. 11, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:98).

Mme Kal, married and mother of seven, offers the same explanation for her decision to return to the village of Ambsibekha in eastern Chad from Tandelta in the Sudan:

> *I had been in the Sudan for two years when one day I heard that people were distributing food back home and that's why I returned* (testimony No. 12, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:99).

Sometimes, a conscious decision was made for refugee families to split up, with older women returning first in order to prepare the ground for the later arrival of the men. This was particularly the case for those in exile out of fear of political persecution, since men were considered at greater risk than women and were thus more obliged to await the outcome of formal negotiations between the central government and the various opposition parties. But such a strategy based on the temporary break-up of families could have longer-than-intended consequences, leading to even greater rents in the fabric of social relations. Such was the case for Mme Fat, mother of three, on her return alone and

unassisted to southern Chad from the hardships of exile in the bush outside a small village in the Central African Republic:

> *Then, with hunger gnawing and no longer able to cope, the older women decided to return, leaving the men behind to await the end of the hostilities ... After the negotiations, the men came back in 1986-1987. But, as for me, my husband still hasn't come back. I don't know if he is dead or alive. So now I raise the children alone* (testimony No. 10 in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:96-97).

For most refugees, aside from the gendered differentials in decision-making which meant that women were sometimes forced to submit to the authority of men within the family or in the larger camp units, the decision to return was rarely forced, nor was it conditioned by pressure from assistance agencies or public authorities. While these could exert a significant "push" factor, as in policies of progressively cutting off aid in camps, as well as a "pull" factor, as in the provision of material assistance for repatriation or the distribution of food aid in particular regions, the decision to return was normally assumed by the refugees themselves (Passang et al., 1992:55). Once decided, many refugees began to make careful preparations for the return. Women would begin to save up proceeds from their petty trade, or would sell off some of the rations provided by UNHCR in order to buy dishes and utensils (Passang et al., 1992:47). Some women, particularly those returning from camps in Cameroon or those who had been able to establish themselves in some sort of trade in the urban zone in Nigeria, were able to save up enough money to procure for themselves a grinding mill or rice huller or other piece of technology to take back with them to Chad (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:42). Manual labourers would attempt to build up their supply of tools in order to return to their trades in the best condition, while farmers would attempt to increase production in order to procure farm implements and other productive inputs to take back with them. Some, however, ventured the return in total destitution, devoid of anything but their wits and the hope of social solidarity or external aid to assist them once back home.

REFUGEE REPATRIATION: THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The institutional framework established to facilitate refugee repatriation depended on political consensus and efficient co-ordination among a complex set of national and international actors. UNHCR was responsible for negotiating, organizing and co-ordinating operations during departure from neighbouring countries, providing material support for the returnees and supervising transport up to the Chadian border. National governments of the countries of refuge were called upon to facilitate operations within their borders and sometimes to provide certain forms of assistance. Chadian authorities, on the other hand, were responsible for developing a general policy framework for refugee repatriation and for establishing national institutions to carry it out. Within Chad, the National Committee for the Reception of Refugees (CNAR) was responsible for establishing contact with refugees in the different countries of asylum, organizing their reception in Chad, providing shelter and urgent medical assistance, guaranteeing their security of person and property and resettling them in their home regions. These tasks were to be carried out in co-ordination with national and international NGOs and humanitarian aid institutions active in Chad. Funding for various aspects of the programme was provided by external aid agencies (Passang et al., 1992:48-50).

While aid for refugee repatriation was not specifically mentioned in the national relief and development plans, the whole was, in principle, tied into the overall emergency assistance operations of the period, which had mobilized extensive donor support and given rise to the creation of various structures to plan and co-ordinate emergency food distributions and other relief assistance. Donors, government representatives and NGOs, for example, were brought together in the capital for weekly meetings of the Committee for Emergency Food Security Activities (CASAU), operating under the authority of the Ministry of Food Security and Populations at Risk (MSAPS). At the same time, Regional Action Committees (CRAs) had been set up under the authority of the prefect in each region to plan distributions of

relief aid to the populations hardest hit by drought and displacement. Meanwhile, the Action Committee for Health Emergencies (CASU) operated within the Ministry of Public Health as a parallel structure to assess urgent health needs and co-ordinate health projects. Partly as a result of such structures, good co-ordination among NGOs within Chad and between NGOs and international aid agencies was judged to have contributed to generally positive outcomes for emergency assistance programmes within Chad (Passang et al., 1992).

Nevertheless, the research team found certain weaknesses characterizing different phases of repatriation and relief aid for returnees. A lack of co-ordination between UNHCR and local Red Cross societies marred some assistance activities within the different host countries, as did the failure to follow through on decisions taken during meetings between UNHCR, host country authorities and representatives of CNAR. Sometimes local authorities in host countries were averse to repatriation of Chadian refugees from their territory, as they appreciated the contributions of refugee labour and wished to retain them and/or the aid income they brought in. Such was found to be the case in some parts of Nigeria (see inset 3) and was evoked by refugees returning from Cameroon as well. There, according to some of the refugees, refugee labour was so appreciated by the Cameroonian authorities that attempts were made to retain them even after conditions in Chad made a return to their home country possible. Refugees were enticed to stay with installations equipped with electricity and water established especially for them. Other strategies were alleged to have included withholding the proceeds of cotton production from those refugees volunteering for repatriation or refusing to allow refugees to return with the agricultural material accumulated in exile. While such allegations were not independently confirmed by the research team, the possibility existed for abuse of refugees by host country officials (Passang et al., 1992:74).

In Chad, the lack of a clearly articulated national policy setting out precise terms of action and defining the exact nature of the partnerships to be established among the various institutions had negative consequences both on the immediate programmes of repatriation and on subsequent processes of resettlement.

Overall, the government had limited resources to devote to repatriation operations and there was some dissatisfaction voiced among returning refugees who were supposed to benefit from such operations. Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that the government perceived the issue of repatriation more often than not from its political angle rather than with a full view of its socio-economic aspects. According

Inset 3 — Repatriation to Chad: Case study of refugees from Nigeria

A case study was conducted by the INSH research team of the formal repatriation to Chad of 1,450 refugees from Nigeria in March of 1990, based on first-hand observations of the procedures involved. Preparatory meetings held in Lagos in December 1989 drew together representatives of the CNAR, UNHCR and the Nigerian government to determine the principles, date and means of return. In January 1990, a team was established to control the repatriation operation. Composed of the Special Services Division of the Military Cabinet of the Provincial Governor, the Chadian ambassador in Lagos and several representatives from UNHCR, the team was placed under the authority of a high central government official.

As UNHCR proceeded to identify and evaluate the number of Chadian refugees in Nigeria, a problem arose due to the lack of unanimity among Nigerian authorities over the repatriation of the Chadian refugees. Federal authorities and those of Borno state, where the majority of refugees were concentrated, were in favour of repatriation, considering that the presence of the refugees placed an added burden on the state budget. Other local authorities in the rural and suburban zones, however, were opposed to repatriation, as they appreciated the agricultural labour of the Chadian refugees in cereal production in their regions. UNHCR thus found itself facing accusations by local authorities of trying to repatriate Chadian refugees against their will. To avoid any further misunderstandings of this nature, CNAR, UNHCR and the Nigerian authorities thereafter jointly decided upon procedures for and participated in the identification of Chadian refugees.

Refugee registration first took place in Maiduguri, where Chadians were gathered together in a camp. Information on individual refugees and heads of household was collected by means of questionnaires for identification and enumeration. Information about the upcoming repatriation and procedures for refugee registration was then transmitted by radio, television and the local press, with teams sent out into the countryside and the urban neighbourhoods announcing the message over loud-speakers. Those Chadians who wished to return sent representatives to negotiate with the authorities on matters such as exemption from

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customs duties for items transported to Chad. In Borno, these representatives named a co-ordinator in charge of relaying information between the different parties. Four thousand refugees were identified in this manner in the state of Borno alone. UNHCR set an objective of 3,000 to be repatriated between March and December 1990; half before the month of Ramadan and the rest between June and July. The date of 16 March 1990 was set for the first group of 1,450.

Some of the Chadians identified as refugees opted to remain in Nigeria. Many had relatives among the Nigerians, shared ethnic bonds or had dual citizenship through marriage which conferred upon them the right of residence. In addition, many of them were quite wealthy, with homes, herds, fields and boutiques; this factor alone disqualified them for UNHCR assistance for the return. It was made clear to all those who wished to remain after the formal repatriations took place that they would henceforth be considered simple immigrants who no longer qualified for UNHCR protection or assistance.

As repatriation got under way, certain inadequacies were observed in the operation. Some had to do with the engagements of the different partners. While a budget of 3 million FCFA (roughly US$ 10,000) had originally been foreseen by UNHCR for the rental of vehicles and the purchase of foodstuffs and medicines, the actual amount obtained was lower. This nevertheless permitted rental of 46 vehicles and purchase of canned sardines and bread, and throughout the operation UNHCR played a central role. The Nigerian Red Cross, while present during the operation, failed to supply the first aid it was supposed to. Likewise, the Nigerian government, which was to contribute to the cost of repatriation by providing military vehicles and a military escort up to the Chadian border, failed to deliver the trucks, though it did facilitate the frontier crossings of the refugees. The Chadian government, which was to have sent 20 vehicles from international organizations such as WFP and FAO, also failed to fulfil its obligation.

Other irregularities arose from the action of the refugees themselves. For instance, while the amount of baggage each refugee was allowed to carry by official convoy was limited, certain abuses occurred, as some managed to sneak their possessions by without UNHCR's knowledge. The case of one head of family who smuggled four or five couches, four refrigerators, five TV sets and other merchandise destined for sale in Chad was probably only the

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most extreme example of many such attempts by refugees to take advantage of the situation.

As the first group of refugees arrived by convoy at Ngueli bridge on the Chad-Cameroon border, many Chadians spontaneously gathered to greet them. An official ceremony was held at the bridge to mark the transfer of responsibility for the convoy to the Chadian government and symbolizing a change in the identity of the passengers from refugees to returnees. Most of the returnees were immediately taken in charge by relatives or friends gathered to meet them and to take them and their possessions — by car, motorbike or even push carts (*pousse-pousse*) — to their homes in town. The others were taken by volunteers organized by CNAR to a temporary reception centre at the girl's high school in N'Djaména where they were provided with necessities and their baggage stored at police headquarters for security. One hour after arrival, the point of disembarkation was deserted.

For those refugees from other regions who were but temporarily lodged in the homes of family and friends in N'Djaména, the trials were not yet over. Landlords raised a fuss about the extra people housed on their property, while the extra cost of feeding the returnees could stretch their hosts' limited budgets to the breaking point. Anxious not to overstay their welcome and eager to return to their own homes, the returning Chadians waited impatiently for the government, in the form of CNAR and CASAU, to arrange their transport home. Some, tired of waiting, borrowed money from their hosts for the return trip. Others were finally informed of the date of departure, in vehicles from international organizations such as FAO, ICRC, USAID and WFP, which transported them to the centre nearest their homes. There they were met by family or friends who again put them up temporarily until they were finally able to return to their home villages.

The difficulties recounted by the returnees in the course of repatriation had mostly to do with the lack of adequate food and health care, with some also mentioning lack of assistance for temporary lodging. However, while insufficiencies in the support provided and problems of co-ordination among the different agencies involved were apparent, with some aspects of the operation having the air of improvisation, the overall experience was a positive one. On the whole, it demonstrated the benefits of political will coupled with popular participation to create favourable conditions for the mass return of Chadians to their home country (Passang et al., 1992:50-51).

to the research team, facilitating refugee returns was seen primarily as a means of weakening the opposition, since the presence of large numbers of refugees in exile not only provided fuel for diatribes against the régime but furnished a stock of soldiers to fight against that régime. Many policies of the Chadian state were thus geared more to dealing with the global "refugee problem" as this was experienced by the state than to solving the particular "problems of refugees" as these were experienced by individuals and groups who were attempting to re-establish themselves in Chad (Passang et al., 1992:101).

The very composition of CNAR reflected the dual political and technical role it was designed to play. Alongside of the prefect of Chari-Baguirmi (the provincial seat of the capital) as president and the mayor of N'Djaména as vice-president, a member of the Central Committee of UNIR (the single political party) served as secretary general and the cabinet director of the government's General Secretariat as treasurer. Also represented were 10 ministerial delegates from the different ministries concerned with repatriation. Operating out of the mayor's office, CNAR was staffed by office workers affected from city and provincial personnel. But with no autonomous operating budget and no mandate to plan follow-up activities once reception of the refugees had occurred, its role was limited to defining priorities for assistance, formulating and negotiating requests for relief aid with UNHCR, countersigning the conventions linking UNHCR with various relief agencies, and distributing work among the different national institutions called upon to implement relief programmes. Even within this restricted definition of tasks, the actions of CNAR were plagued by poor planning, with resulting lags in material assistance and transport of refugees to their home regions running counter to government aims of instilling a climate of confidence among the returnees. Moreover, CNAR's presence was limited to N'Djaména. While the actions of CRAs, the Chadian Red Cross (CRT) and humanitarian assistance agencies partially made up for this lack of field presence in regions of mass refugee returns, co-ordination between CNAR and regional actors was sometimes lacking and supervision of activities weak. As a consequence, many of the refugees interviewed in all three zones

of return complained of shortcomings in the aid received (Passang et al., 1992:55, 102-104).

RELIEF ASSISTANCE

Among the national institutions working most closely with CNAR in providing emergency relief to returnees, CRT received high marks from the research team for its efficiency and speed in dispensing emergency assistance. In the case of the 1981-1982 repatriations to N'Djaména from Kousseri, CRT, working with funding from such agencies as CARE-Tchad, ICRC and USAID, helped prepare temporary housing and distribute foodstuffs and emergency supplies (Passang et al., 1992:104). International agencies such as MSF, UNICEF and WFP were also active during this period; especially in furnishing the social centres of the capital with food, medical supplies and other equipment and assuming operating costs of many of the activities led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Advancement (MASPF) for destitute returnees flocking to these structures.

In 1986, CRT also played an active role in the resettlement of returnees from the Central African Republic to the southern prefectures through the repatriation programme financed by UNHCR. Conceived as a link between initial emergency relief and later development aid extended to the region, this programme distributed some 2,000 tons of grain, 27,000 blankets and 10,000 cartons of kitchen utensils as emergency relief aid to 60,000-70,000 returnees in the region. This was accompanied by 500 tons of seed and agricultural equipment including 27,400 hoes and 12,000 machetes designed to help the returnees regain economic self-sufficiency (Passang et al., 1992:105, 120). Later programmes of assistance aimed at victims of drought returning from the Sudan to eastern Chad included massive food distributions by WFP and emergency medical care provided by MSF; while 27 tons of rice were distributed to populations repatriated to N'Djaména between 1987 and 1989, again with the assistance of CRT (Passang et al., 1992:108, 121).

Relief assistance had contradictory effects on the lives of returning refugees. On the one hand, it was clear that the

material aid provided did, in fact, help some refugees recover from complete destitution and serve as a springboard towards renewed self-sufficiency as they set about the process of rebuilding their lives. On the other hand, the provision of relief aid itself could have unintended consequences running counter to longer term development aims. Refugees benefiting from the resettlement assistance programme in Moyen-Chari, for example, expressed dissatisfaction that UNHCR's promises of aid to continue for six months were not fulfilled and that some of the material they were supposed to have received was not forthcoming:

> *On leaving the camp in Djaya [Central African Republic], UNHCR helped us a lot. They [also] promised us assistance for six months during our resettlement back home. In the agricultural domain, UNHCR promised us means of production, seeds, agricultural materials and fertilizer. In terms of housing, UNHCR promised to furnish us with cement, wooden beams and nails. In addition, they promised to provide us with foodstuffs for the same length of time. We received nothing of all that* (cited in Passang et al., 1992:120).

The research team considered such complaints exaggerated, attributing them on the one hand to false expectations among refugees who had become overdependent on external aid and on the other hand to the fact that the agricultural equipment was distributed not just to the refugees but to local populations in the region. Research revealed that agricultural materials had indeed been distributed to the refugees as had money permitting the reconstruction of houses destroyed by war. The team thus concluded that the major part of UNHCR's promise to the returning refugees had been honoured and that the refugees additionally benefited from later programmes of development in the region. But, while the material that was delivered was supposed to serve as a stimulant to development activities during the phase of resettlement, its actual effect was seen to have rendered the returnees ever more passive and dependent on external aid (Passang et al., 1992:121).

At the same time, as with any large-scale programme of material assistance, potential for abuse existed. Among refugees returning to Logone-Occidental from Cameroon, for example, some claimed that administrative authorities had confiscated the foodstuffs UNHCR had allotted to them. According to one returning refugee, whose testimony was confirmed by the research team:

> *The basic assistance in foodstuffs that accompanied us on our return was not delivered to us on arrival; it was confiscated. For example, I was at the head of 700 returning refugees granted an allotment of 300 sacks of rice, 100 cartons of oil and 200 cartons of sardines. But not one refugee obtained any of this upon arrival ... The local authorities ... promised that the foodstuffs would be delivered to us in our home villages. This never happened* (testimony, in Passang et al., 1992:119-120).

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF REPATRIATION

Analysis of national policy and programmes from the perspective of gender revealed no explicit differentiation between women and men returnees and thus no special consideration of the specific needs of women in national repatriation processes. As observed by Nodjal and Passang (1992:69), while national policies and programmes in favour of refugee returnees were in principle supposed to deal with the needs of all returnees, regardless of gender, there was a prevailing tendency to marginalize women, or at least to ignore their specific needs. On certain lists of returnees prepared for repatriation, for example, wives' names did not always figure next to husbands' names. This was taken by the researchers not only as a sign of the lack of interest in women returnees, but also as an indication of the manner in which women's identities were subsumed under the identities of their menfolk. In this way, the woman refugee was transformed into the mere wife of a male refugee, with full recognition for her autonomous status as refugee denied. The consequences could be that the woman's needs as a refugee were overlooked. It was

further noted that there were few women among the political leaders responsible for determining national policies and developing programmes in favour of refugees and returnees. The members of the executive bureau of CNAR, for example, were all men. With women denied decision-making power at national level, women's special needs as refugees and returnees could pass unperceived and unaddressed. Such tendencies to marginalize women as actors were seen to be in line with both indigenous African traditions and the prevailing gender ideologies and practices of public and private institutions that they in turn served to prop up (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:9).

Yet while the general programmes of assistance extended to returnees as a whole may have ignored certain aspects of women's participation, they did, nevertheless, help meet the immediate survival needs of some women returnees and their children. Furthermore, some programmes for emergency assistance in Chad did indeed focus specific attention on the most vulnerable members of society, including women along with children among their targeted population. This was particularly the case for many of the emergency medical projects and supplemental feeding programmes supported with aid from such agencies as MSF and WFP, which responded to many of the health and nutrition problems cited as a major concern by women refugee returnees. It was also true of the relief activities launched in the urban social centres run by MASPF with aid furnished by UNICEF and the French Aid and Co-operation Agency (FAC). In a form of analysis increasingly being adopted by feminist analysts and practitioners, such programmes may be seen to have been vital in responding to the "practical gender needs" arising out of women's immediate and concrete problems, though neglecting to address more "strategic gender needs" with approaches aimed at confronting sources of women's oppression in society (cf Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1991). Moreover, as emergency concerns shaded into development thrusts, both the special needs of women as well as the vital resources they have to offer tended to be neglected as the emphasis turned to male actors. Even programmes that contained special components for women in the planning stage more often than not left these unfulfilled in

the processes of implementation, as will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.

Whatever the gendered inadequacies of some of the national policies and programmes established to assist in refugee returns, women who returned spontaneously faced even more problems. For many women who had not benefited from assistance in exile and who, moreover, undertook the return trip without the assistance of formal programmes of repatriation, the hazards and hardships of the return could often equal if not surpass those they had faced in exile. Some women were obliged to work at odd jobs along the way in order to meet the costs of the voyage and ensure the survival of the family. Sometimes they failed, losing the children they had managed to keep alive in exile to hunger and sickness on the way back to a home they often had to reconstruct from scratch.

> *During the return trip [to eastern Chad], on arrival in each village, my husband, my children and I would split up to look for work. I would grind grain or carry water while my husband and children would provide labour on fields. That is how we were able to find enough to eat and a hut for shelter* (testimony of Mme Hal, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:42).
>
> *Once in the country, I lost my youngest child due to lack of medical attention. He had been sickly since our exile and the long voyage back on foot worsened his condition* (testimony of Mme Ach, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:43).
>
> *On our arrival, there was no one to meet us and so we had to sleep outside while we rebuilt our houses* (testimony of Mme La, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:43).
>
> *We decided to return, but, in the meantime, all of our houses had been burned. There was nothing left, not even a single groundnut in the earth. It was very difficult. We ate wild fruits and roots that were sometimes poisonous and killed. Up until now, I can't seem to recover the strength I had before. Little by little, I lost interest in everything* (testimony No. 9, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:95).

> *We came back [to Moyen-Chari] without negotiation, without official repatriation and we came back to a country in ruins. Only the military barracks were inhabited ... On return, we took two days to rest, then we began to look for straw to reconstruct our houses* (testimony No. 10, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:96-97).

Women's experiences of repatriation were thus as diverse as their experiences in exile, with numerous hardships, uncertainties and loss of loved ones clouding over the relief generally felt at being able to return to their homes. Women who returned alone with their children as single heads of household and those who returned without the benefit of official structures of assistance had the most difficult time, as the long voyage back took its physical and psychological toll. But even for the lucky ones who received repatriation assistance, the future loomed before them filled with uncertainty as they all faced the difficult task of reweaving the threads of their broken lives.

CONCLUSION

As refugees attempted to survive in their different conditions of exile, they invariably stayed on the alert for news of home. Official proclamations of a return to peace would be confirmed by independent sources through informal networks of communication that provided a lifeline of information for Chadians abroad. Once the decision to return was made, refugees who could afford to would begin to make material preparations. Those officially registered as refugees would report to UNHCR for formal repatriation, while others were forced to return on their own, facing multiple hazards along the way. While certain inadequacies and irregularities were noted in some aspects of the official repatriation programmes and the refugees themselves voiced some dissatisfaction with the relief aid provided to them on their return, it is clear that those who were so assisted must be counted among the more privileged of the returnees. For in spite of the weaknesses in national policy governing the returns and in the institutional framework established to co-ordinate assistance

efforts, the assistance provided to some of the returning refugees did effectively help to meet their immediate survival needs. Were development programmes in the regions of return able to meet the even greater challenge of responding to the longer term productive needs of returnees as they attempted to rebuild shattered lives? And what of the equally pressing development needs of local populations? The following chapter will explore the dynamics of processes of resettlement, observing some of the problems encountered and analysing some of the programmes designed to respond to them.

5 PICKING UP THE PIECES
PROCESSES OF RESETTLEMENT

For the refugees who had received assistance in exile, the return to Chad could be more difficult than the experience of exile itself. In place of the semblance of stability and physical security established in camps where the major problems of survival were adequately met, a host of problems, uncertainties and dangers awaited the refugees on their return to their home country. For those who had been more or less on their own, daily life continued to be a constant struggle to ensure survival. Whether assisted or not as formal “refugees” in their countries of exile, Chadians returned to a changed situation in their regions of origin. The country they found on their arrival was in ruins. Basic infrastructure had been destroyed by war; administrative buildings bombed or pillaged, hospitals and schools torn down or looted, homes and sometimes entire villages burned and belongings stolen. Drought had cut devastating swathes through the rural zones and the effects lingered on in the poverty of resources to restimulate production. While the return of rains in 1987 meant that crops could again be planted; farmers often had few implements with which to farm and cotton producers were faced by crisis in the cotton sector. Herders, meanwhile, could not so easily reconstitute the herds that had been decimated by drought; many migrated to the cities seeking menial labour in order to eke out a survival. But the urban centres were also in ruins, especially

the capital, which had been almost completely destroyed by the war. Professionals found that most of the formal sector jobs had simply disappeared as banks had shut down and businesses had closed their doors. Civil servants came back to an administration that functioned only as a result of the foreign aid sent in to rebuild and re-equip offices and support operating costs; salaries remained at a pittance and were paid irregularly. Meanwhile, there were constant doubts as to whether the peace and stability that seemed to have returned with Habré's rise to power would actually last. Though tensions continued to fester, the south seemed quiet by 1986-1987 and the north had been regained by Habré's troops by 1988. But unrest and outbreaks of violence continued, particularly in the centre and east of the country. Internal dynamics leading to the loss of legitimacy of certain traditional chiefs contributed to the precariousness of the social order in some regions.

It was under such conditions, as the country as a whole launched consecutive programmes aimed at reconstruction and development, that refugee returnees attempted to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. As they did so, they themselves often contributed to processes of social change in the different regions of return, as many came back from exile with new attitudes, new techniques and a new-found willingness to adopt new practices. Some met with a joyful reception in the communities to which they returned; others met with hostility, suspicion and rejection. How did they adapt to the changed situations they found on their return? And what programmes of assistance were available to help them in the processes of resettlement and development?

FROM RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT

The research team drew a distinction between emergency aid to refugee returnees and longer term development aid in regions of mass return. The first, as we have seen in chapter four, was co-ordinated by CNAR and implemented by national bodies such as CRT, various ministerial departments and CASAU. NGOs and international humanitarian institutions involved in emergency

assistance to Chad not only provided funding for the activities undertaken by national bodies, but also engaged in direct implementation of some programmes, the latter being seen as a necessity in view of the weakness of state capacity to respond to the urgency of the needs. Development activities in the regions of mass returns, on the other hand, were largely the responsibility of the National Office for Rural Development (ONDR), again aided by NGOs and international institutions. The whole (relief and development) was placed under the general authority of the Ministry of Planning and National Reconstruction (later named the Ministry of Planning and Co-operation), which was responsible for setting national relief and development policy and for co-ordinating the international inputs. As the activities of the emergency period shaded into efforts for longer term development, the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation was strengthened in its role as co-ordinator partly through aid provided by major donors such as the French Aid and Co-operation agency (FAC), UNDP, USAID and the World Bank. The Permanent Secretariat for NGOs (SPONG) was set up within the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation to monitor the activities of the plethora of NGOs operating in the country since the emergency period and a series of sectorial roundtables uniting donors and government agencies were held to help plan and co-ordinate development efforts. In their analysis of national development plans from 1982 to 1990, the research team noted the absence of an overall national policy to guide programmes of development designed specifically to benefit returning refugees and displaced populations. This was attributed mainly to the dire situation characterizing the whole of Chad in the emergency period and its immediate aftermath, with local populations who had stayed in the country throughout the period of troubles facing as many problems of survival and development as those returning from exile abroad. Some national authorities expressed concern about appearing to privilege returning refugees with development aid, arguing that this was not only unfair, but that it could also contribute to heightened social tensions in the major regions of return. As one official of CNAR put it: “Once having returned to their home regions, refugees are citizens like any other. They should not receive any special treatment that would

privilege them and generate conflicts with those who have remained in the region" (Passang et al., 1992:113-114).

Yet, while no specific reference to returnees was made in development plans of the time, their needs were implicitly taken into account in texts articulating the need to secure the livelihoods of populations affected by drought and war. Both the Interim Plan of 1986-1988 and the Orientation Plan of 1990, for example, mention actions in favour of displaced populations and others without singling out refugees for special consideration — the accent being placed on achieving equitable regional development. Furthermore, within the context of overall reconstruction and development efforts in Chad, specific projects targeting returnees and displaced populations were elaborated. Different in nature from the emergency assistance provided for the return itself, most sought to stimulate processes of development within the major regions of return, with both returnees and those who had remained included as beneficiaries.

A number of projects for African refugees and returnees arose out of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held in Geneva in 1984 and referred to as ICARA II. In Chad, these included three projects with a total planned budget of US$ 1,341,670 co-financed by the European Development Fund (EDF) and French, Swiss, German and American aid agencies, and implemented by a variety of international institutions, NGOs and government agencies. The first project aimed at the resettlement of refugees returning to the southern prefecture of Moyen-Chari from the Central African Republic; the second at refugees returning to the south-western prefecture of Logone-Occidental from Cameroon; and the third at refugees returning to the eastern prefectures of Ouaddaï and Biltine from the Sudan (Passang et al., 1992:112; and Bearez and De Tavora, 1987:19). These so-called ICARA II projects were accompanied by other projects led in the same regions by various state agencies, NGOs and other humanitarian aid institutions (see map 4).

EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH-EASTERN CHAD: MOYEN-CHARI

The ICARA II project designed for refugees returning to the region of Moyen-Chari was implemented by the local Catholic aid agency, the Bureau for the Study and Liaison of Charitable and Development Activities (BELACD). With a budget of US$ 307,717, the agricultural component of the project consisted of creating 150 village groups composed of six families each in the eastern part of the subprefecture of Maro in the prefecture of Moyen-Chari and distributing credit for the purchase of agricultural material. Each group was to receive three pairs of draught oxen equipped with yokes, three ploughs, two tillers, a cart, and materials for maintenance and repair. All of this material amounted to a value of US$ 1,667 per group, 60 per cent of which was to be reimbursed by the beneficiary groups over the two-year course of the project. The amount reimbursed was to constitute a rolling fund for continuing development projects determined by the groups themselves (Passang et al., 1992:112).

Field research in the region turned up less than conclusive results for the agricultural component of the project. While village groups were indeed created by BELACD, their members had participated neither in the planning of activities nor in the purchase of animals and equipment. They thus did not feel responsible for the necessary care and upkeep and many of the oxen died of neglect (Passang et al., 1992:112). Other problems seemed to have arisen in the theft of oxen by groups of pastoralists whose transhumance routes had shifted to the south as a result of the drought, creating heightened conflicts in the region (Nodjal and Passang, 1992). All in all, production dropped as a combined result of the pockets of drought affecting the region and lack of follow-through by ONDR (and by the Ministry of Livestock, according to Bearez and De Tavora, 1987) whose agents were supposed to provide technical support to the groups. As a consequence, the project was not able to recuperate the money loaned for the intended development activities that were to follow (Passang et al., 1992:112). Two years into the project, over half of the intended beneficiaries interviewed by the team

reported that the aid had not allowed them to attain standards of living comparable to those before flight (Passang et al., 1992:123).

The research team provided no specific analysis of the role of women in these groups, but some testimonies of women returnees to the project area indicate that they may have been marginalized in some of the main agricultural activities. Reports one woman from the village of Moussafayo, Moyen-Chari, who came back from the Central African Republic unaccompanied by her husband and had not seen him since:

> *BELACD has intervened to give agricultural equipment to a few groups of men, but for us women we only once got some foodstuffs and then some seeds. Now, I've run out of steam. I can no longer work with the hoe as I used to. Sometimes, I go to work on the fields of others for 200 FCFA [less than US$ 0.67]. This type of thing used to be humiliating for a dignified woman, but now it's accepted* (testimony No. 10, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:96)

Such difficulties faced by a woman returning without male support seem not to have been adequately addressed by the programme of assistance in the region. But another woman seemed to have suffered just as much from the very actions of her husband within that assistance programme, actions over which she had no control:

> *One day, [my husband] caused a lot of trouble for the men of the village. You see, ONDR gives out fertilizer on credit and right after the sale of cotton, you have to pay it back. If just one person in the village defaults on his debt, the following year no one in the village will be given credit but will have to pay cash for the fertilizer. And my pitiful husband did what shouldn't be done, spoiling it for the whole village. Nowadays I make* bili-bili *and during the rainy season I cultivate my field of groundnuts, but this time by hand. Twelve of us women have grouped together in a* tontine *[women's informal revolving credit group]* (testimony No. 9 in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:94).

While this project, as the other ICARA projects originally set out in 1987 (Bearez and De Tavora, 1987), had foreseen a specific component for women, which included distribution of such labour saving devices as groundnut grinders, rice hullers, maize grinders and push carts, as well as the extension of literacy training, research uncovered very little evidence of such activities on the ground. Reasons for the lack of fulfilment of project objectives for women included a shortage of funds and the limited number of trained female personnel within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Advancement to carry out the activities foreseen (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:71).

Parallel activities in other projects in the Moyen-Chari region focused on the rehabilitation and extension of village water supply systems and improvement of village hygiene and sanitation. One early project financed by UNHCR and implemented by the national water supply company (SOTRAHY) aimed at drilling 50 wells designed to "sedentarize the returnees and displaced populations on fertile lands, provide water for their animals and fight against desertification and drought" (project cited in Passang et al., 1992:116). This project was designed to accompany the earlier distribution by UNHCR of relief foodstuffs and agricultural implements in the region (see chapter 4). The research team reports that, as a combined result of the relief and development projects, dozens of wells had been drilled and some 60,000 persons resettled in the region (Passang et al., 1992:116). A more elaborate water-supply and sanitation programme later implemented jointly by ONHPV (SOTRAHY's successor) and the NGO CARE-Tchad in the same region seems to have had even more extensive results, with 334 wells drilled in the sub-prefectures of Maro and Moïssala at the time of research and 75 others foreseen for the districts of Goundi and Bediondo. The project arose out of village requests for clean water supply in a region where cultural taboos militated against the performance of well-drilling. Based on a philosophy of popular participation in the costs of development inputs, each head of household was obliged to contribute towards the cost of drilling. The project also included construction of latrines and water hygiene education, with all activities benefiting both returnees and local populations. Women were integrated particularly into the sanitation

component, with teams of rural *animatrices* proving to be very effective in dispensing information on domestic hygiene (CARE-Tchad, 1989). These efforts were able to build upon the earlier work of MSF among the same populations during their stay in refugee camps in the Central African Republic, with the project thus benefiting from positive links between the emergency aid and development thrusts (Passang et al., 1992:130,170-171). Health activities for women in the region were later extended through the work of the Centre for Rural Social Training (CFSR) established by Swiss missionaries, with trained midwives operating in 16 villages and future projects foreseeing training for women in veterinary medicine (Passang et al., 1992:118).

The Association for the Promotion of Community Initiatives in Africa (APICA), a Swiss-financed organization, also operated in Moyen-Chari. While not intervening directly in programmes in favour of returnees, its activities were seen to have contributed to their effectiveness, especially through training offered to local artisans in carpentry, blacksmithery and welding. Much of the training was geared towards production of needed agricultural tools and implements, including wheelbarrows and carts, providing in this way an essential link between the agricultural and manufacturing sectors and strengthening local self-sufficiency. Competing successfully against the N'Djaména-based parastatal company for the manufacture of agricultural material (SIMAT), in 1991, APICA artisans were able to provide 200 carts ordered by ONDR in Sarh (Passang et al., 1992:108, 117-118). There is no mention of the inclusion of women in the training programmes offered by APICA. But another project in the region, run jointly by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Advancement and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, with support from UNDP and UNIFEM, aimed specifically at training women artisans in the manufacture of labour saving devices for household use, operating out of the Centres for Agricultural and Professional Training (CFPAs) established throughout the southern zone of Chad (MASPF/DEFPA/UNIFEM, 1989).

Aid had contradictory impacts on returning refugee populations in this region. On the one hand, the type of emergency assistance provided to refugees from the region in

exile in camps in the Central African Republic was seen to have led to a certain passivity among these populations who grew to expect aid hand-outs (cf Passang et al., 1992:76). As discussed in chapter 4, this was also felt to be the effect of some of the aid offered by UNHCR during repatriation (Passang et al., 1992:120). On the other hand, certain programmes of emergency assistance in the camps — for example, those run by MSF — were seen to have had positive effects in laying the groundwork for later efforts aimed at health education. NGOs and other aid agencies in the region were, in fact, generally seen to be conscious of the need to provide an adequate transition from relief to development and were successful in their efforts to do so (Passang et al., 1992:110). Some development projects in the region, such as CARE-Tchad's well-drilling programme, seemed to be particularly successful in their efforts to build activities around the principle of popular participation, even to the extent of overcoming local prejudices against well-building (Passang et al., 1992:124). The less-than-satisfactory results of the agricultural component of the ICARA II project may be due in part to the limited time period examined — two years being insufficient to measure the longer term economic impact of activities on populations in the region — and in part to the complex and delicate nature of agricultural development processes, in which forces beyond the control of project planners and implementors — such as drought and continuing social tensions — intervene to affect outcome. Under such conditions, popular expectations of rapidly recovering what was lost during war and exile and of getting back to levels of well-being previously enjoyed were understandably frustrated.

These frustrations and the hardships involved in efforts to re-establish households under changed and difficult social conditions were voiced particularly clearly by women returnees to the region, especially those most affected by the breakdown of family ties and structures of social support. Yet even such women, while understandably discouraged, were far from passive in the face of the multitude of challenges confronting them. Rather they displayed courage, fortitude and great resiliency in seeking to pick up the shattered pieces of their lives — some attempting to reactivate distant ties of kinship to help them through the most difficult period of adjustment, others reaching

out to other women to create new forms of female solidarity and still others resolutely drawing on their own inner resources and demonstrating their capacity to go it alone:

> *I was repatriated in 1987. My husband decided that we should come to Sarh [capital of Moyen-Chari], since we had nothing left in Moïssala. We lived in great hardship and one fine day my husband left and never returned. That hurt me, but I understand that he left because he couldn't stand seeing us suffer so much. He must have left Sarh for good, as I never again saw him in town, unless perhaps he was killed. I came to stay with a distant cousin who I have no doubt will not be long in speaking his mind — that is, in asking me to leave. I had two empty barrels and one or two large glasses. I was sure that I would be able to re-establish myself in preparing drinks in order to feed my small family. I was sure that one day my husband would return and we would live together happily again. For when he left I was pregnant; surely he will come to see his fourth child* (testimony No. 2, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:88)*?*
>
> *In Moussafayo, there are a lot of mosquitoes. We have no more mosquito nets or cups, so we set up some* tontines *for which contributions range from 150 to 200 FCFA [between 50 and 65 US cents — i.e. under 1 US dollar] every two weeks. Now in the village each family has at least one mosquito net under which huddle father, mother, children, dogs ... Sometimes only the head and the feet fit under the mosquito net* (testimony No. 10, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:98).
>
> *We were repatriated in 1987 with a few things to live on while waiting to get ourselves organized. We returned to Ndakonon, but saw that there was nothing left — no house, no hoe — so we would have to start from zero. We decided to come live in Sarh [capital of Moyen-Chari]. Here I prepare* bili-bili *and sell groundnuts. I abandoned farming because I'm not good at it* (testimony No. 3, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:89).

Many women in this region evoked the difficulties encountered in their attempts to hold the remnants of their shattered families together, expressing agonizing concern for the children who had lived through the breakdown of civil society and seen their parents reduced to nothing:

> *[After the difficulties of resettlement], my eldest son could stand it no longer and left us to go look for work with some rich merchants in Sarh [capital of Moyen-Chari]. Many youths are leaving the village in this manner to go to Sarh or Bangui [CAR] — we can't do anything about it. Maybe these children don't understand why we've become so incapable, we who are their parents* (testimony No. 10, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:97).

> *Many things have changed since our return. Children no longer accept instruction, there is no more sense of modesty and no more respect at Maro. Young girls of 12 or 13 leave school to become prostitutes in town. Young boys also flock to the towns, refusing to take up agriculture ... Even after initiation [traditionally practiced in the region], youths leave for the towns to become houseboys. This is something new. Children look at us as if we have grown horns. Really it hurts me — I who am a teacher — to see children turn up their noses at school and mock the elders who used to be respected for their wisdom* (testimony of Mme Klah, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:54).

Others described conditions of ongoing insecurity and voiced their fears that violence might break out anew:

> *I could very well start again with new energy, but I'm discouraged and afraid. You can see, there's fear in all the faces of the villagers. Me, I'm afraid that the troubles will start up again, since I'm not sure that the problem has been resolved* (testimony No. 10, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:97).

Given the weakness of the formal economy in the Chad to which they returned, many women found that their economic activities in "the informal economy" became the mainstay for their families' survival. The heightened importance of women's contribution to

the household in turn helped overcome male resistance to women's participation in certain activities. Such was the case for Mme Ba, whose husband had previously objected to her sale of the local alcoholic beverage, *bili-bili*, but now accepted it as a necessity:

> *My husband used to prevent me from engaging in commerce. The problem stemmed from his jealousy; he felt that if he left me such freedom, I would be courted by others. But in 1980, when government salaries for my husband were no longer being paid, I was obliged to prepare* bili-bili*. My husband wasn't pleased, but let me do it anyway ... Repatriated in 1987 [from Boubou in CAR], we continued on to Maro, where my husband works at the medical centre. All my own working materials had been pillaged. I'm attempting to make* bili-bili *again, but it's not the same as before because I have to go prepare at other people's places and pay for the right of place. This is difficult, but the money I make allows us to live for the three or four months it takes for my husband to be paid one month's salary* (testimony of Mme Ma, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:58-59).

Women's new-found economic importance in the face of male incapacity not only gave them more leverage and autonomy within the couple, it also led in some instances to a heightened questioning of the desirability of remaining within a couple at all. With women having proved to themselves and to others that they could fend for themselves, why should they submit to husbands whose demands were felt to be unreasonable? With new forms of female solidarity to draw upon, why should women stay together with men who were found to be socially inadequate or ineffectual as household providers? As the terms of marriage shifted and mutual obligations and responsibilities broke down, marriage was no longer the most desirable option for some women. Rising incidences of women taking the decision to break out of unsatisfactory marriages on their own initiative can be seen on the one hand as a sign of women's increased autonomy and on the other hand as revelatory of a general deterioration in gender

relations. As such, women experienced it as both positive and negative:

> *In 1989, I left my husband because it was no longer working out between my rival and myself. Moreover, my peasant husband had difficulty adapting to life in the city and started becoming jealous all of a sudden. I've given up on men and have decided to live alone and raise my children. In any case, my commerce is going well* (testimony No. 3, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:89).

> *Then, one day, I decided to leave my husband. It was useless to pretend — I no longer loved him. He had become a lazy do-nothing and big drinker of alcohol. Faced with starting everything again from scratch, he withdrew and now takes refuge in alcohol ... The other people pretend to like me, but actually they reject me because I deliberately left my husband* (testimony No. 9, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992).

The majority of women interviewed confirmed that the changes in relations between men and women were permanent and that they could never return to the way things had been in the past. For one thing, the trade-offs in the form of economic security that could be gained through submission to men in the marriage contract were no longer to be automatically expected. For another thing, the consciousness that had been raised among women, whose new sense of autonomy had been largely forged under conditions of hardship in exile, seemed now to be irreversible. What remained was for men to undergo the same sort of transformation in their attitudes and behaviour towards women and for the marriage contract to be redefined in a mutually satisfactory manner (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:59).

EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH-WESTERN CHAD: LOGONE-OCCIDENTAL

Within the framework of ICARA II, a project identical to the one described above for Moyen-Chari had been foreseen for the

resettlement of refugees from Cameroon returning to the prefecture of Logone-Occidental (Bearez and De Tavora, 1987; Passang et al., 1992:108, 119; and Nodjal and Passang, 1992:71). World Vision, an American-based NGO of Protestant persuasion, was designated for the implementation of activities, in collaboration with ONDR. Financial support was provided by BAND-AID, EDF, FAC and USAID, with food distributions offered through WFP. Actions seemed to centre on the creation of village groups, the construction of village granaries and the establishment of a network of services for primary health care, though it is not always clear from field research whether such activities were all led in the framework of the ICARA II project or in relation to other development projects being implemented in the region.

One project in Logone-Occidental, financed by the European Community and the French government, with food provided by WFP, left no trace on the ground, according to the research team. Called "the green wave", it originally aimed to equip 300 self-governing cotton markets in the region; to construct 145 storehouses for marketable cereals; and to supply agricultural material to stable peasants in the zone. In the course of implementation, however, political concerns seemed to outweigh social considerations and the project was transformed into a programme aimed at repatriating and so "pacifying" some 9,000 *codos* returning from the Central African Republic and Cameroon. While ONDR was initially designated to manage the project, its role was apparently taken over by the official FAC. A reception centre for returning *codos* was established in the region of Moundou (capital of Logone-Occidental), where agricultural materials and equipment such as hoes and hatchets were distributed. At the same time, programmes were planned to train the *codos* in techniques for creating village development groups prior to their return to their home regions. But due to serious disagreements and misunderstandings on the aims of the project, the *codos* left the centre before the training could be provided, apparently aghast at the proposal that they participate in the creation of an "agricultural commando" group to be integrated into the National Armed Forces of Chad (FANT) — the very army they had been fighting against (Passang et al., 1992:112).

This region in general seemed host to all sorts of problems in the processes of resettlement of refugee populations, with some individuals encountering so many difficulties that they chose to return once again to Cameroon, this time as self-elected exiles (Passang et al., 1992:99). Political, social and economic factors all seemed to contribute to the problems in Logone-Occidental, which development programmes there could only address in part.

As we have seen in chapter 4, some refugees repatriated from Cameroon had seen their allotted foodstuffs confiscated by authorities during the process of resettlement. They were thus left to their own devices on their return to their home regions (Passang et al., 1992:119-120). Once there, they were often met with hostility and suspicion on the part of local inhabitants. This seemed to be especially the case in the village of Tapol, where jealousies aroused by the material goods and money the returnees were perceived to have gained through exile disrupted the delicate balance and equilibrium of social relations in a society traditionally structured against any private accumulation on the part of individual members. While many returning refugees, both men and women, expressed their dismay at the negative attitudes of the local populations, women seemed to be the most keenly affected by the atmosphere of hostility poisoning social relations in the village and the most sensitive to the feeling of being outcasts in local society:

> *I was born in this village, but it's only after our exile that I have really come to know the village. There is no solidarity. People treat us like strangers, as if we were thieves escaping from prison* (testimony No. 6, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:92).

> *At Tapol everything has changed. There is no longer any solidarity as there used to be. We no longer visit each other; our meeting place is the market. Furthermore, I have suffered in particular because they say that I had gone to Faro to look for men and to get rich from UNHCR. Now I have a field, but production is not like it used to be, nor like it was in the camp, where there was a certain solidarity* (testimony No. 7, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:93).

> *UNHCR had assisted us well, but back in Tapol, there was indifference. Those who had stayed detested us. They called us "Mai Faro", that is, the people of Faro [implying those who had fled their country]. In the market, the prices of foodstuffs were raised when we arrived. They treat us like rich people since UNHCR had given us a little money* (testimony No. 8, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:94).
>
> *There is no longer any solidarity. The people who stayed behind in the village despise us. In the market, for example, there are two prices for things, one for the refugees and the other for themselves* (testimony of Mme Log, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:71).

Because of the relatively short duration of their period in exile (from two to three years), most of the rural refugees returning to this region were able to reclaim their agricultural lands, drawing on customary laws providing for the restitution of lands to members of land owning lineages who have been absent temporarily, providing that the fields had not been left fallow for too long. Others, however, had difficulty in either recuperating or rehabilitating their lands. This was particularly the case for certain owners of fruit tree orchards who returned to find the orchards invaded by weeds and brush or else occupied by others who claimed them as their own. Political factionalism seemed to be at play in such conflicts over land in the region, with members of the ruling party, UNIR, considering themselves justified in taking over the property of former members of the opposition and local authorities powerless to rule against them. As one individual explained:

> *I haven't been able to recuperate my orchards. The person occupying them is an official in UNIR. He claims that since he has been working on the land, it should be given to him in compensation for his labour, proposing that only a small part be returned to me. He refuses to recognize that he has been exploiting my orchards illegally. I have refused his proposition and have sent a letter of complaint to the CNAR. I await their response* (testimony in Passang et al., 1992:61).

Other landowners came back to find their fields gone to bush, their fruit trees dead through lack of upkeep and all of their agricultural equipment stolen. Only a quarter of the refugees interviewed in this region reported receiving help from their neighbours through the lending of agricultural material or seeds necessary to recultivate their lands (Passang et al., 1992:62). Requests for aid from ONDR also came to nought for many, since credit for agricultural development was extended only to those organized into recognized peasant groups — not to individual landowners. As one orchard owner complained:

> *Accustomed as I am to managing my own plantation in my own manner, I can't see myself joining a group of producers who don't have the same rhythm of work or management style. With my 20 hectares of orchards, I just can't see myself in a group of cotton growers* (testimony in Passang et al., 1992:62).

In some instances, even those among the returnees who were cotton producers compared the development structures established in this region of Chad with those they had known in Cameroon, finding the Chadian structures inferior. The peasant producer groups in the region were established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's Department for Professional and Agricultural Training (DEFPA), with inputs for agricultural production provided on credit by ONDR. But this system was found to be much less effective than the Cameroonian co-operatives in which many Chadian refugees had participated. Furthermore, macro-economic policies inspired by the World Bank and IMF which aimed at restructuring the cotton sector in response to the dramatic drop in cotton prices on the international market were especially keenly felt in this prime cotton growing region. Attempts by the authorities to limit production through increased restrictions on inputs and seeds had generally negative effects on peasant livelihood and added to the difficulties faced by returning refugees. As one returnee explained:

> *Here in Chad we are in village groups whereas in the camp we were in the co-operative system. The latter gave us the means of production on credit; the village groups give*

> *nothing. It is difficult to apply what we have learned* (testimony in Passang et al., 1992:124).

Some returnees, however, were able to capitalize effectively on the experiences gained in exile and to strengthen the work of these village peasant groups. In order to by-pass the restrictions on productive inputs imposed in Chad, for example, returnees reactivated ties with suppliers of the Cameroonian cotton co-operatives they had previously participated in, establishing clandestine supply networks that eventually enabled peasants to increase the quota of cotton bought from them by the parastatal company CotonTchad, which holds a monopoly on cotton purchases. Such an increase in the negotiating power of village groups may partly explain their growth in numbers, jumping from 200 in 1986 to 7,000 in 1990 for the south as a whole (Passang et al., 1992:121-123). Other returnees managed to apply further what they had learned about co-operative management in Cameroon to the management of peasant groups in Chad, assuming leadership roles in such groups and effectively transforming certain practices, in spite of the limited means of support for development activities:

> *Here, we have tried to recreate the organizational climate of the camp by instituting the same system of work; that seems to work better. Even our compatriots who had stayed behind in the village follow our advice. Unfortunately, what we lack are the financial means to support such activities* (testimony in Passang et al., 1992:74).

The transformative role of the returnees was seen to be especially significant in relation to the self-governing cotton markets in the region, which functioned as one of the most important activities of the peasant groups. The aim of these markets, established in the mid-1970s, was to enable peasant producers to control the sale of their own production and to minimize sources of exploitation from agents of ONDR and CotonTchad. Cotton produced by individual peasants would first be weighed in the village on scales maintained by peasant participants in the self-governing markets, before being taken on to a second weighing at the CotonTchad factories. The excesses

in weight that were often recorded in the latter weighing were a significant source of extra income previously pocketed by intermediaries but now controlled by the peasant groups. Refugees returning to the zone contributed to a shift in orientation in the use of such funds by village groups, directing them towards investment in productive activities in addition to their habitual use in the development of social infrastructure. They were also able to serve as diffusers of new agricultural techniques, such as sowing in a line, and were credited with introducing into the region the cultivation and preparation of new food crops, such as the yam (Passang et al., 1992:73,77,121-122).

A rise in the volume of market exchanges in the region was noted by observers and was attributed at least partly to the presence of refugee returnees who had been able to accumulate some savings in exile and generated new demand through their participation in productive activities on return. Massa II and Madaya are cited as two villages in Logone-Occidental inhabited primarily by refugee returnees whose dynamism was apparent in all aspects of village life. In Massa II, for example, a group of returnees contributed US$ 666 for a well-digging project, invested in a groundnut sheller and established a health care project named Djasra, meaning “We can do it”. At the same time, youths of the village also created a music club (Passang et al., 1992:75-77).

Such positive experiences in local development structures, however, seemed mostly to be the lot of men. Testimonies of women returnees to the region paint a more mixed picture of continuing hardship and scraping to get by, with women again appearing to be left out of consideration as beneficiaries of the more productive components of regional development initiatives. Numerous evaluations of CFPAs, where the peasant producer groups were formed, have noted the neglect of women producers in most training programmes that aim at the transfer of new farming technologies and extension of draught agriculture. Women at the centres — most commonly referred to as the wives of male peasant trainees — are usually limited to stereotypical classes in home economics or domestic welfare (cf. Lefebvre, 1974; Foly and Lafitte, 1981; Lieberherr-Gardiol and Ryser, 1985; Tubaru, 1987). Women must thus resort to a variety of economic

strategies to make ends meet — especially those women who have no husbands or other male family members to rely upon, as was the case with many women refugee returnees:

> *I've taken up work on my field again, but it's not like before. In the dry season, I sell* bili-bili *and fried doughnuts and rent out my grinding machine, That's how I am able to feed my children. When we arrived, village development groups were already in existence and, as they only admit single women, I joined one. We have a collective field of cotton. Work on this field takes up a lot of time and prevents us from giving serious attention to our own fields. What I wish for now is to have a pair of oxen and a plough. That would really help me raise my children. My eldest son is at school in Moundou [capital of Logone-Occidental]. If I don't give him enough help, he will get discouraged and will abandon his studies and become a delinquent* (testimony No. 8, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:94).

EXPERIENCES IN THE EASTERN SAHEL: OUADDAÏ AND BILTINE

The ICARA II project designed for refugees returning to eastern Chad from the Sudan was implemented jointly by ONDR and Catholic Aid and Development (SECADEV), the largest national NGO in Chad and a major actor in both relief activities and efforts geared towards local development. Initiated in 1987 in the regions of Guéréda in the prefecture of Biltine and Adré in the prefecture of Ouaddaï, the project aimed at the creation of cereal banks for food security and for sale of surplus production; the development of garden production in the region's numerous *ouadis*; the introduction of new crops such as sesame, *niebé* (a type of bean) and a variety of early ripening sorghum; and social sector activities in health and education. As in the BELACD project in the south, the activities were to be pursued by village groups that were to be created in the region. However, yet again the research team uncovered less than conclusive results.

In Biltine, while 81 village groups were created, project activities were stymied by recurring civil war in the zone (Passang et al., 1992:125). In Ouaddaï, the village beneficiaries themselves explained that the aid furnished by the project was insufficient and had not enabled them to recover their previous level of livelihood. While 174 village groups had been established, the cereal bank had not gotten off the ground by the time of research. While a selected stock of seed and foodstuffs had been collected after the good harvest of 1988-1989, lack of rain in the 1990-1991 growing season coupled with ravages of crops by insects compromised development efforts. A further problem arose in the sale of the groups' produce. Lack of an adequate road network and weaknesses in the transport system had particularly negative consequences for the sale of garden produce that could not be stored; lack of marketing outlets greatly discouraged the five groups that had worked well in the cultivation of such produce (Passang et al., 1992:114). As one group member put it:

> *You asked us to produce a lot of millet and groundnuts which nobody buys and now you are asking us to produce sesame. We don't understand you (testimony in Passang et al., 1992:129).*

Such a short-sighted productivist bias in project activities marked other development programmes in Chad as well, and it was increasingly being recognized that problems of marketing were often more severe than problems of production. Thereupon, the project also focused on establishing better marketing opportunities, with a total of 111 kilometres of new tracks opened up for use through community efforts compensated with food. But, according to an ONDR agent in the region and as confirmed by the research team, the overall benefits of the project were not so much economic as social (Passang et al., 1992:128-129). While project activities up to the time of the field research had not attained the original objective of rendering beneficiaries more economically self-sufficient, they had stimulated a process of social change among village communities, which augured well for further development efforts:

> *Many local development groups in Ouaddaï have arisen on the model of those created during the emergency period, for SECADEV continues to distribute seeds and foodstuffs in compensation for the performance of certain public works, as, for example, road construction. But, as the project draws to a close, training of the groups in management of agricultural production and especially in the marketing of their produce has been limited to management of the seed stocks. One cannot thus speak of the impact of the project as far as the activities originally foreseen are concerned. On the other hand, the social effects of the project are numerous. One can see a change in mentality in terms of greater willingness to mobilize for collective work, wider acceptance of communal management of goods and materials, increased desire for education as manifested in the construction of schools and more concern for the creation of health centres. Such attitudes were never observed before the project* (testimony in Passang et al., 1992:126-127).

While only 14 of the total 255 village groups created by SECADEV in the course of the project were for women, the women participating in them seemed to be particularly strong agents of change in the region. Having passed through the crucible of exile, in the course of which they had been called upon to assume new economic roles and to accept more extended social responsibilities, they were subsequently able to consolidate their new-found identities within the structure and framework of activities offered by the project. These women proved to be dynamic leaders of the development groups established by the project and no longer hesitated to voice their opinions in group discussions — even in those involving men. As noted by an anthropologist studying such processes of social change in Biltine, the creation of village development groups had opened up new forms of social interaction among different categories of people, with special significance for gender relations. Such groups provided socially sanctioned occasions for "men and women to mingle, to appreciate each other and to jointly defend common interests, breaking free of the baggage imposed by social stratification and putting into practice their new-

found autonomy" (Tubiana, 1989:196, cited in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:63).

New forms of social solidarity among women also arose through participation in common work within women's co-operative groups, which extended ties beyond the traditional structures of female kin. The women of Ouaddaï were also very receptive to the introduction of new crops for cultivation in the region such as beans *(niébé)*, sesame and a variety of early ripening sorghum. With a proven readiness to adopt new strategies for the survival of their households, they immediately perceived the economic advantages of such crops: in 1989, for example, one *koro* (local measure equal to approximately 2.5 of a kilo) of *niébé* could bring in 800 FCFA, compared to 50-75 FCFA for a *koro* of sorghum (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:56). Nor did women returning to Ouaddaï show any hesitancy in adopting economic activities traditionally reserved for men, exercising such activities both as a function of necessity and as a mark of their new-found autonomy. As one woman in Abéché explained, she had taken up the manufacture of head caps for men "not only for something to do outside of the household, but in order to be able to meet her economic needs without recourse to her husband" (cited in Passang et al., 1992:78). Religious restrictions on certain activities also began to weaken, with Muslim women taking up the preparation and sale of alcoholic beverages, for example (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:60-61), and cultural restrictions against women appearing in public were eroded:

> *Since my return from exile, I frequently go to public places like the market where I've established myself in selling kitchen equipment — a profession that used to be forbidden as it was considered undignified for a young woman to expose herself in public during the day* (testimony of Mme Am, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:60).

Certain women were able to build specifically on the skills and experiences acquired in exile. Mme A, whose knowledge of Arabic and French was highly sought after by Sudanese families engaging her as a tutor for their children returned to become a bilingual secretary in Chad. Mme F, who was trained as a midwife

by MSF in the refugee camps, returned to continue her work as assistant midwife in Abéché (Passang et al., 1992:88).

On the whole, women returning to eastern Chad from the hardships of exile in the Sudan were able to draw both on their own inner resources and on the new — albeit limited — opportunities offered to them through development programmes such as SECADEV's as they resettled themselves in their home regions. But perhaps the most significant factors contributing to the ease of such processes were the strength and receptiveness of civil society in this Sahelian zone. In marked contrast to the hostility greeting many of the refugee groups returning to southern Chad, returnees in the Sahel were by and large assisted by family, friends and neighbours who had remained behind. Part of the reason for this difference may lie in the different situations that had provoked flight in the first place; with those in the south fleeing the effects of war and those in the east generally fleeing drought. While the after-effects of war had left lingering suspicions and smouldering hostilities among populations in the south, the dislocations caused by drought in the Sahel had left social solidarities intact. Furthermore, conflicts over land such as those marring relations between local populations and returning refugees in Logone-Oriental were largely absent in this region of extensive agriculture combined with pastoral production where land was available to all. Also absent were the contrasts in living standards that had fueled such conflicts in Logone-Oriental, where the populations that had remained at home considered the returning refugees to have gained disproportionate material advantage from their time in exile. And, finally, while formal programmes of repatriation that had singled out the returning populations for assistance may have inadvertently contributed to conflicts in the earlier cases, emergency food distributions established in eastern Chad effectively benefited refugees and local groups alike. Hardships aplenty remained — with problems of poverty and persistent drought still threatening well-being — but at least there was a sense that members of society could face these problems together and help each other out through the worst of times (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:43-44):

> *At home, I feel better. I can work the land anywhere and I am helped by my relatives even though this year the rains are not sufficient. It is better to stay than to go to the Sudan where I am considered a foreigner* (testimony No. 15, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:102).
>
> *On return, I was well received by my parents. We've taken up our old activities once again. I am also a member of a development group* (Mme Fat, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:44).
>
> *Once back in Abougoudam, we received a warm welcome from our relatives and we are still being put up by an aunt who is sharing her only room with us. Our own home having been destroyed, I'm doing my best, with the aid of the locals, to repair it* (Mme Kou, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:44).

Besides SECADEV, other agencies were at work in eastern Chad, leading various sorts of relief and development activities. MSF was a significant actor, even after the emergency phase when it provided urgent medical care to refugees returning to a complete absence of state health facilities (Passang et al., 1992:108). Other projects in the same region included an extensive well-drilling programme managed by UNDP, with a health and hygiene component concerning women in particular (UNICEF, 1990), and another agricultural project run by the German NGO Agro-Action Allemand (AAA) and ONDR, with funding from the European Development Fund. This latter project aimed, as the SECADEV project had, to render returnees to the regions of Abéché, Am-Dam and Guéréda self-sufficient in food through increased production in the *ouadis*. Draught agriculture was to be introduced into the region, as well as the promotion of crop rotation and parallel activities in reforestation were to be led. Scheduled to last two years, its impact on the ground at the time of the investigation was judged by the research team to be negligible and prospects for success dim. Part of the problem stemmed from a lack of understanding of local society. In fact, most of the 5,000 returnees to whom agricultural equipment had been distributed were pastoralists, engaging in agriculture only

temporarily. One year into the project, as herds were slowly reconstituted, these groups returned to their pastoral lifestyle — no doubt selling rather than utilizing the agricultural equipment they had been given. Thus the crop rotation and reforestation activities had not yet gotten off the ground. Problems also arose through differences in points of view between agents of ONDR and AAA who disagreed on both working methods and project aims, the former terming the project a "white elephant" that wasted precious development resources. It was generally felt that more realizable objectives should be set based on an adequate understanding of the social milieu and a limitation in the range of activities to pursue so as not to dilute project impact (Passang et al., 1992:111-112).

RESETTLEMENT OF DISPLACED POPULATIONS: THE EXPERIENCE OF KARAL

Some projects conceived during the emergency period aimed at the resettlement of populations displaced by drought as well as returning refugees around Karal, Bokoro, Fitu-Kournari and Bousso in the west and centre of Chad. The project at Karal, in the Lake Chad basin to the north of N'Djaména, was one of those most closely observed by the research team and also the one deemed most successful. As the only example, documented by the team, of processes involved in the massive resettlement of rural populations in new regions where they had no previous roots, it provides an interesting contrast to the majority of projects in Chad involving resettlement of populations within their regions of origin. The populations in question — estimated at some 25,000 (Passang et al., 1992:90,121) — were mostly agropastoralists originating from western and central Chad. Uprooted by both social conflict and the 1983-1984 drought in the Sahel, some had sought relief in neighbouring countries — Cameroon, Nigeria and the Sudan — while others had gone as far abroad as Saudi Arabia. Unable to return to their home regions because of continuing drought or complete destitution, many had migrated towards N'Djaména in search of food and shelter. Fearing an explosive situation in the capital, which was

itself destroyed by war and unable to accommodate the influx of starving people, the government first established feeding centres in the rural zones hardest hit by drought, particularly in the prefectures of Batha and Kanem. Urgent medical care was provided in addition to food, with many international agencies and NGOs participating in the emergency operation. Some of the same organizations later helped implement government policy aimed at resettling these displaced populations in regions less prone to drought and more conducive to agricultural production. CARE-Tchad also initiated a project aimed at resettling populations in Kanem through intensified cultivation in the *ouadis* (Passang et al., 1992:116).

The project at Karal was implemented jointly by the ONDR and SECADEV, later joined by the Dutch Volunteers (SNV) and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Operating with a budget of US$ 608,279 furnished by the European Development Fund, with later inputs from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the project aimed at establishing the refugees in villages — both newly created and existing in the region — and at stimulating integrated activities of the same sort as those pursued by SECADEV in eastern Chad as described above, with additional attention to water provision (Passang et al., 1992:114-115). First, however, land allocations had to be made to the newcomers (see inset 4).

Once land was allocated, activities at Karal were led within the framework of development groups that were established by SECADEV, whose agents were responsible for training group members in management and other domains, and ONDR, responsible for providing technical support and overall co-ordination of the project. The groups showed rapid expansions, with numbers rising by 15 each year, to reach a total of 118 with 1,858 members at the time of the field investigation (Passang et al., 1992:124-125). Members paid dues into a common fund and provided labour on collective fields for the creation of cereal banks and the construction of schools and village pharmacies with materials provided by the project. Officers chosen from the groups (president and secretary) were mostly returnees from the Sudan with some experience in co-operatives. Although the organizational model of the group was judged by some of the

SECADEV personnel to be too complex to permit complete management of group activities by the mostly illiterate returnees and only half of the groups were judged to be functioning optimally, the overall results of the project were positive, especially in terms of increased agricultural production of dry season crops cultivated on rich alluvial lands. According to the head of the ONDR sub-sector at Karal, yields rose from 1,500 kilograms per hectare in 1982 to 2,500 kilograms per hectare in 1989 over a cultivated surface increasing by 3,600 hectares over the same period (cited in Passang et al., 1992:114-115, 124-125). To the maize, *niébé* and gumbo previously cultivated in the region, new crops such as tomatoes, watermelon and potatoes were introduced (Passang et al., 1992:127). This enabled the resettled refugee groups to dispense rapidly with the food aid provided and to recover their dignity as independent producers. Furthermore, proximity to the capital, which was linked to the zone by a good road, provided an easy outlet for surplus production. As one returnee noted with pride:

> *When we arrived here, we had nothing of our own. We were entirely dependent on the aid furnished by SECADEV and the government. We suffered a lot. But one year after our installation, we were not*

Inset 4 — Land for resettlement: An experiment in western Chad

Before development activities could begin in the region of Karal, the incoming populations drawn from a number of different ethnic groupings in Chad (including the Hadjerai, Boulala, Ouaddaïen, Kouka and Mesmedjé) had to be allocated land for resettlement among the local inhabitants of the region who were primarily Arab (including the Assalé, Salamat, Benisef and Amakadère). These land allocations had to pass through both traditional authorities, in this case the Sultan and local village chiefs, as well as through regional representatives of the state. Under customary law, the village chiefs, or *boulamas*, are only authorized to distribute land to members of such Arab groups. For "stranger" groups drawn from other ethnic categories to accede to rights of usufruct over lands in the region, a process of negotiation takes place between the Sultan and the local inhabitants whose accord must be obtained before the *boulamas* can proceed to allotment of village lands for use by the newcomers. In the case of project allocations, historical alliances and links between the Arab groups and the others were reactivated as a basis for new inter-ethnic accords. Thereafter, in the presence of authorities of the central government and the prefect of Chari-Baguirmi, the cantonal chief distributed parcels of land to the first wave of newcomers. Each head of productive unit was granted 3,600 square metres of alluvial land along the flood plains of Lake Chad and 3,600 square metres of inland lands for rain-fed agriculture. With usage rights established by the authorities and recognized by local populations, the first groups were resettled without major incident. Problems arose, however, with the later arrival of other groups of displaced populations who found themselves forced to rent lands from village chiefs at rates ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 FCFA for access to half a hectare of rich alluvial lands. Some unfortunate late arrivals found that they had actually paid for lands that already belonged to others and were obliged to give them up without compensation. Such irregular practices arose as a direct consequence of resettlement. While the cantonal chief appeared to deplore them, he claimed that intervention at his level was impossible. The team concluded that regulation was required to halt such speculation in land in a region that continued to attract more and more newcomers (Passang et al., 1992:58-60).

> *only able to produce our own food, but to sell the surplus for other necessities* (testimony, in Passang et al., 1992:121).

One of the officers of the groups demonstrated the dynamism characteristic of many of the returnees in devising a strategy whereby his group's produce could be taken directly to N'Djaména for marketing, by-passing the intermediaries. He also requested permission from the mayor of N'Djaména to set up a warehouse for the goods in the city. Such dynamism was seen to stem in part from the experience of exile which had toughened the refugees, forcing them to rely on their own wits for survival and teaching them valuable lessons which they brought back with them (Passang et al., 1992:75). One of the most significant changes noted by all concerned the attitude towards and willingness to work:

> *Exile [in Nigeria] taught me to be active; as you can see for yourself, I can't stay put. By day I am a tailor at the market and at night I am a guard for SECADEV. I have to keep myself busy all the time and earn as much money as I can find in this village. For extra income, I am aiming to sell the produce of my fields which I work on every third day* (testimony of night guard and tailor at Sidjié, in Passang et al., 1992:89).

> *I stayed in Nigeria for two years where I worked as a mason, learning the trade there. I was paid — 400 naira — on contract for each job. It wasn't easy because when the contract was up I could be out of work for two to three months. I had to save up for those difficult days. Thus, exile taught me two things; the profession as mason and how to save. Nigerians don't like the family parasite and so everyone works to gain his daily bread — there's no common meal for the entire family. That forces you to work and save* (testimony of mason, in Passang et al., 1992:89).

This new attitude towards work and the rational approach to savings and management was considered to represent a veritable revolution of the spirit among the refugees, which could rub off on the others among whom they settled. In the village of

Baltram, for instance, the example provided by the refugees served to change attitudes throughout the village. As the representative of the cantonal chief explained:

> *The refugees' acceptance of work has stimulated the local inhabitants. Before their arrival, we were rather lazy and produced just enough to live. The example set by the refugees, who arrived here destitute but now can do without aid and even produce a surplus for sale, has given us new energy, spurring us on in turn to produce more to increase our income* (cited in Passang et al., 1992:90).

As with the experience in the south, where water and sanitation projects helped break down resistance towards well-drilling, the "revolution of the spirit" went so far as to erode the power of existing cultural taboos against other types of labour. Such was the case for Mr. A, a tailor by profession, who took up tanning during exile — a job normally reserved for special castes considered the lowliest on the social hierarchy. On return to his home village, he continued to practice tanning, which he no longer despised:

> *Today I have managed to get my family to accept this trade, though they were reluctant at first. It pays well and I'm able to feed a lot of relatives with what I earn from this work* (testimony, in Passang et al., 1992:90).

As in Logone-Occidental, a rise in the volume of marketing activities in the region was attributed directly to the presence of the newly settled populations, which contributed to a reinvigoration of the rural economy through programmes of assistance designed to increase production (Passang et al., 1992:75). New weekly markets blossomed and expanded throughout the region, with their economic influence extending beyond Chad's borders to attract traders from Cameroon and Nigeria who came to buy maize, millet, *niébé* and sweet potatoes produced largely by villages of resettled refugees, as for example Sidjié, Baltram and Gredey. The village chief of Sidjié declared with pride:

> *My village has come alive and grown rich mostly due to the presence of refugees. I am proud that my own region can furnish the capital with produce in abundance and can even supply the Cameroonians and Nigerians. My village is known in the region for the production of maize, but to this is now added watermelon,* niébé *and potatoes* (cited in Passang et al., 1992:77).

The economic upswing brought significant improvements in social conditions for many of the villagers as a sense of stability took hold. As one inhabitant of Baltram observed with satisfaction:

> *The future is sunny for these villages. The change can be seen in the improvement in the condition of the houses, with straw huts replaced in many instances by houses of beaten earth* (banco) *covered with corrugated iron and even more stable terraced houses appearing as well. All this demonstrates the inhabitants' decision to remain where they are* (testimony in Passang et al., 1992:77).

Investments in the future were particularly apparent in the rise of spontaneous schools, with parents contributing both labour and funds to ensure that their children's education continued. Prior to the events only one school existed in Karal; by the time of the investigation 15 schools had sprung up (Passang et al., 1992:131).

Women returnees were also organized into groups at Karal, mostly for gardening activities. As in Ouaddaï, women displayed distinct leadership ability in these groups and showed great capacity for planning with an eye to economic benefits:

> *We cultivated a collective field of groundnuts, gumbo and maize. While the groundnuts came to nothing, the gumbo and maize promise a good harvest. In the future, we plan to concentrate more on garden produce and maize, as these bring in more money* (president of women's group in Sidjié, Karal, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:57).

Women's work roles were thus changed and expanded both as a result of their experiences in exile and as a function of the new opportunities opened up to them on their return. As in the south (Tapol), where some women returnees had come back with new

technology such as grinding machines acquired in Cameroon which they were able to make use of themselves as well as loan out to others for extra income, women resettled in villages around Karal were able to activate commercial contacts forged in exile in pursuit of long-distance trade — a very profitable activity formerly reserved primarily for men. Women in both Logone-Occidental and Karal were able to take advantage of the permeability of national borders in these key frontier zones to trade in Nigerian cloth, cosmetics, whisky and alcohol. Furthermore, through contacts with women of other countries and exposure to different examples of *tontines*, or revolving credit systems practiced by groups of women throughout Africa, Chadian women returnees were able to introduce into the region an expanded form of the traditional practice of *azouma*. The *azouma*, or "invitation", normally brought female kin together for parties organized by each of them in succession prior to a significant social event, such as a marriage or baptism, for which a large outlay of capital was required. The guests invited to the *azouma* would be expected to contribute "gifts", which would allow the host to build up her capital for the coming event. Chadian women returnees began to practice a more commercialized form of this system of *tontine*, known as *pari-vente* or *djougournouma*, which consisted of parties organized in public bars or restaurants and open to everyone. Income from the sale of drinks at the party enabled women to accumulate large sums of capital and strengthened ties of female solidarity beyond the immediate kin group (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:42, 57-58).

> *And so I began to trade in whisky which I sold to members of the Mixed Brigade (Chad-Cameroon-Nigeria) of Bagasola [Nigeria] near Lake Chad. I returned to Baltram [in Chari-Baguirmi] in 1987 and have never stopped bringing in whisky. I am also a member of a women's group that functions on the basis of a* tontine *in order to build up a "black box" for our future projects* (testimony of Mme Al, in Nodjal and Passang, 1992:42).

There are some indications, however, that the most development-oriented aspects of the project at Karal may have favoured male participants. While some women assumed leadership roles in

development groups on their return, the number of groups open to them was much smaller than for men; furthermore, no woman was president of a mixed group (Passang et al., 1992:130). In interviews with female personnel of the Dutch organization, SNV, and the national Ministry of Industry and Commerce, which joined SECADEV in implementing a programme aimed at the creation of rural co-operatives on the basis of the development groups already formed in the region, it was revealed that the primarily male project managers resisted efforts to integrate women into project activities. Women producers were consequently marginalized, with only 5 out of the 20 co-operative groups established by 1990 open to women members (GIRAF, 1990). SECADEV itself seemed to experience some difficulties in integrating women into all aspects of its programmes. Although a division for the promotion of women had been created within SECADEV in 1986, some of its female staff complained that male colleagues were hostile to their work and refused to co-operate on matters of technical training (GIRAF, 1990). Such resistance to the integration of women's concerns into development programmes was by no means specific to this project, but was found to be a general characteristic in a number of assessments carried out on women and development in Chad (cf Ki-Zerbo, 1985; Pour, 1985; Djibo and Kuesel, 1988; UNICEF, 1990).

URBAN EXAMPLES

The research team focused primarily on the experiences of populations returning to rural zones and the programmes of assistance designed to help them rebuild their productive capacity in agricultural activities. Urban experiences are less clearly documented, though particular problems encountered by urban professionals on their return to the capital are briefly evoked (Passang et al., 1992:63-67) and one programme aimed at extending loans to help urban entrepreneurs start up or rebuild small businesses is examined (Passang et al., 1992:117, 131-132). For returning civil servants, army personnel and employees of state enterprises, the policy of national reconciliation guaranteed a return to their former posts. A certificate of

resumption of functions gave them the right to receive their salary at the end of the first month and, while no financial compensation was granted for the period of exile, the time was counted in administrative calculations for advance and promotion. Moreover, certain high level appointments in Habré's administration were reserved for influential leaders of the opposition as a means of enticing them to return and to work towards "national unity". Political tensions still ran high, however, and numerous conflicts arose between the returnees and those who had stayed behind as each claimed the right to greater consideration in the administration. As one returning teacher who was named director of a school in N'Djaména put it:

> *I arrived back in N'Djaména seven months ago and was named director of the school FDAR Chagoua. Problems arose as soon as my nomination was made known. My colleagues said that they had been there through the entire civil war and had never been granted a promotion. "How is it", they wondered, "that someone who had fled all the suffering and returned with the excuse that he had been a political leader in exile is named to be their superior?" Having had enough of such accusations, I preferred to ask for a transfer to Moundou to be with my family* (testimony, in Passang et al., 1992:64).

Other problems arose as a "clash of cultures" became apparent when refugees returning with new ideas and attitudes towards work encountered rejection and resistance on the part of colleagues who had remained behind. This was particularly the case with those who had remained abroad for the greatest length of time, as reported by one teacher returning after 10 years in Côte d'Ivoire:

> *My colleagues treat me as a deracinated individual. They say that ever since I arrived I've annoyed them with my behaviour. They consider me obsessed by order, for example. I insist on cleanliness as if I could put an end to all the dust and sand storms of Chad. They even think that my courteous mannerisms towards them are exaggerated and irritating* (testimony, in Passang et al., 1992:65).

Others found their attempts to introduce new approaches to work and management learned abroad rejected by colleagues who only wanted to continue with things as they were. This led to discouragement and frustration on the part of the returnees, some of whom opted to quit government service in order to launch independent establishments such as private schools or clinics. In so doing, many faced administrative obstacles thrown up by a state still determined to control the economy (official policies promoting the "disengagement" of the state notwithstanding), or found themselves bereft of sources of credit to build up the capital necessary for such endeavours. As one doctor who returned from Nigeria explained:

> *In Chad, the state is providence and all intellectuals are drawn to careers in the civil service. This is not the case in Nigeria, where private initiative is encouraged on many levels. Chadians find it risky to leave the civil service. Even worse, when someone does want to establish a private business, he finds the route strewn with multiple obstacles and continual hassles. At least, this is what I have experienced since my return from exile. I wanted to leave the state department I had worked with in order to open up a private clinic. All my papers were in order, yet I still encountered enormous reservations on the part of my administrative superiors. It took several years for a ministerial order to be issued authorizing me to open up my clinic. All this is to show that our administration is terribly backward compared to Nigeria's* (testimony in Passang et al., 1992:65).

For private entrepreneurs and artisans returning to pillaged shops and ateliers in N'Djaména, the dearth of capital and equipment, and the extremely limited availability of credit rendered a return to productive activities particularly difficult. The formal banking sector had been severely disrupted by the war and programmes of support for small and medium enterprises were slow in getting off the ground. One NGO, Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA), operating in the capital since 1986, used funds from USAID to grant loans to more than 50 small and medium enterprises as well as to artisans of the informal sector. While

certain beneficiaries found the conditions of the loans restrictive and interest rates high, the programme was successful in allowing at least some entrepreneurs of the capital to get back on their feet and VITA reported a 70 per cent reimbursement rate in 1990 (Passang et al., 1992:66, 117, 131-132).

Others, however, especially among the totally destitute urban poor, simply lacked the collateral necessary to apply for such loans or remained ignorant that the possibility of credit existed. This was particularly the case for many women whose activities in the informal sector were their only means of survival. Some NGOs, such as Oxfam and SECADEV, set up small projects for such women in the urban zone, establishing a system of revolving credit functioning along the lines of the traditional *tontine* (Nodjal and Passang, 1992:80-81; see also Djibrine-Sy, 1989). The Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Advancement also co-ordinated a programme of assistance operating out of the social centres of the capital where many destitute women among those returning from exile as well as among the internally displaced had flocked for food distributions donated by WFP. Many were widows or had been abandoned by husbands during the civil disturbances and now found themselves entirely responsible for the welfare of their families. Some of these women were organized by the Ministry, with aid from UNICEF and other donors, into groups for the production of handicrafts and a store was opened in the capital for the sale of their goods. The impact of the project remained rather limited, however, both as a result of the narrow market potential for women's handicrafts and because a persistent welfare bias on the part of project administrators interfered with the aim of rendering the women artisans self-sufficient (INADES-Formation, 1987; Woods, 1988; Watson, 1994).

Meanwhile, other destitute women of the urban zone remained completely outside of any official structures of assistance. Interviews with a family of squatters living in makeshift tents strung out along a desolate stretch of urban wasteland revealed the often desperate plight of such families — many composed solely of women and children. Victims, for the most part, of the drought that had destroyed rural livelihoods in the Sahelian prefectures, such women and children were reduced to the most

menial jobs — grinding grain, selling firewood, pushing push-carts, begging in the streets — in order to eke out the barest form of survival:

> *Hassaniya M. has lived in N'Djaména for four years. She is the mother of seven children, of whom two have died. Her eldest son, born of her first marriage to a husband now deceased, is 15. She just gave birth to another boy a month ago but her second husband abandoned her while she was still pregnant and left to go back to the village right after the naming ceremony. Hassaniya has not worked since she was pregnant. She now has to attend to the newborn and also see to her one and a half-year-old daughter who has diarrhea. She is completely dependent on the work of her children, but the eldest son has lost his job as a push-cart pusher and now the family's well-being resides in the second son, Moussa, who is 10 years old and sells fried doughnuts prepared by a neighbourhood woman. A third son is sent out to beg. Hassaniya knows that her children should be preparing their future in school and not on the streets, but they just can't afford it. As it is, they live from day-to-day (UNICEF, 1990:92).*

CONCLUSION

The findings of the research team suggest that, while formal assistance for repatriation extended through UNHCR and the associated national structures for the reception of returnees in Chad did indeed alleviate many of the material and administrative hardships associated with the return trip (see chapter 4), the resettlement process itself was still fraught with problems of a social nature that could, in some instances, be aggravated as a result of the aid the refugees had received in exile and on return. Indeed, refugees returning to some zones, particularly in the south, were frequently met with suspicion and hostility on the part of local populations who saw the returnees as having unjustly benefited from aid while those who had remained behind received nothing. At the same time, while refugees who

spontaneously undertook the voyage of return on their own clearly encountered many physical hardships and tragedies along the way as a direct result of the lack of formal assistance, resettlement in their home villages was often facilitated by the spontaneous reception extended to them by the neighbours and kin they had left behind. This seemed to be the case especially for refugees returning to eastern Chad from the Sudan.

In both instances, programmes of assistance established to deal with the immediate needs and long-term development problems of both the local populations and the returning refugees seemed most appropriate as a response to the complex social situation characterizing the different regions of Chad. Such a response in turn required a degree of co-ordination among the different organizational actors that was often lacking in practice and was, indeed, sometimes in contradiction with certain macro-economic policies imposed on peasant producers, particularly in the cotton zone. Moreover, while some women's immediate needs for material assistance and relief were addressed through the general assistance extended to returnees, others were completely neglected; policies for women in the major regions of return were inadequate and the programmes planned specifically to aid them in regaining their productive capacity remained relatively weak.

Despite such drawbacks, some returning refugees proved a dynamic force for social change in their regions of return and contributed to a revitalization of the economy. With survival skills honed through the hardships associated with uprootedness, they attempted to apply lessons learned in exile and proved willing to adopt new practices. Changes were particularly noted in gender roles and relations, as women took on heightened responsibility for the well-being of their households and gained a new-found sense of autonomy in the process. The most successful programmes of development assistance were those that were able to build on the dynamism of the returnees while pursuing policies of balanced regional development.

6 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The research team came up with a number of general conclusions drawn from its investigation of the refugee experience in Chad that serve to expand our understanding of the dynamics involved in flight, exile and return. It also proposed certain recommendations that may be useful for decision makers when confronting similar situations in the future. The team's findings may be formulated under two main headings. The first concerns the refugee experience itself, with observations on the impact of crisis and transformation on individuals and groups. The second summarizes the lessons learned from the analysis of programmes of assistance.

UPROOTEDNESS: CRISIS AND TRANSFORMATION

In the situation of general uprootedness and mass movements of population characterizing the recent history of Chad, attempts to distinguish clearly between refugees and the displaced or between economic migrants and political exiles represent mere academic exercises in labelling, with such labels serving only to cast a veil over the reality of human suffering. Whether pushed by fear of persecution for political opinions; caught up in general conditions of war, violence and insecurity; fleeing drought-

provoked famine; or simply seeking survival under conditions of poverty and underdevelopment that have been accentuated by the breakdown of socio-economic support structures, the experience of uprootedness in Chad has been one of great trauma and stress that has left both physical and psychological marks on all those involved. Many refugees never fully comprehended the reasons for the social upheavals that forced them to flee their homes and seek refuge in exile. Others understood only too well, but remained powerless in their wake. Suffering hardship, loss and tremendous sorrow in the midst of senseless death and destruction, their attempts to adjust to new situations were often clouded by fear and uncertainty.

Beset by crisis, some refugees succumbed to despair, taking refuge in drink or in passive acceptance of aid, when that was available. Yet others — by far the majority — displayed amazing courage, resilience and resourcefulness in the face of crisis. Meeting head-on the challenges confronting them in unfamiliar surroundings, these men and women were able to turn crisis into opportunity. Some drew on the support of kin or those of shared ethnic identity to help them survive in exile. Others were left completely on their own in their battle for survival amidst hostile, indifferent or exploitative local populations. The luckiest benefited from programmes of assistance, which not only helped them meet their immediate needs and participate in decisions affecting their lives, but allowed them to gain new experience, learn new techniques and accumulate resources for their eventual return. Many refugees emerged from exile as changed individuals who, in turn, often became agents of change in their regions of return as they attempted to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives and move on.

A multitude of observations gathered over the course of the investigation bear witness both to the transformative nature of the refugee experience itself and to the dynamic and transformative roles of refugees resettling in Chad. Change has been evident in both attitudes and practices and has touched diverse aspects of cultural, social and economic life. A new attitude towards work seems to have emerged, forged in the crucible of displacement where survival depended on the ability to adapt and to work hard. Many refugee returnees or internally displaced people

demonstrate a determined willingness to take on multiple tasks or to perform manual labour previously scorned. As a consequence, cultural taboos and social stigmas attached to certain types of work — well-digging or blacksmithery, for example — have been called into question, as have religious injunctions against, for example, the sale of alcohol by Muslims. The rigidity of gender-specific labour has also begun to break down as women, often pushed by necessity as they assume responsibility for their households, move into jobs previously reserved for men. In the process, they acquire new confidence in their ability to ensure the survival of their families and face life with a new feeling of autonomy.

Exposure to new practices and techniques in exile has expanded the horizons of many refugees, male and female. Some men returning from camps in Cameroon have become leaders of peasant groups in Chad, introducing innovations in agriculture and in the management of co-operatives. Others exalt in the spirit of private enterprise witnessed abroad and take bold new initiatives on their return. Women have also assumed leadership roles in development groups and have forged new forms of female solidarity that extend beyond the traditional kin group. Such transformations have been seen to be especially evident in the Sahelian zone where Islamic women have returned from particularly hard conditions in the Sudan to question existing gender hierarchies and demand more of a say in community affairs. New economic opportunities have been seized upon by many refugee returnees, whose general dynamism has been credited with the economic revitalization of some regions of return. Drawing on networks of trade established in exile, peasants returning to the rich cotton producing region of south-western Chad have been able to by-pass restrictions on productive inputs imposed by structural adjustment policies in the region. Women returning from Cameroon and Nigeria have also been able to capitalize on contacts abroad to engage in long-distance trade. Other refugees returning from the Sudan have readily adopted new food crops, bringing corresponding changes in dietary practices.

Not all of the changes, of course, have been experienced by the refugees as positive ones. Some changes in attitudes and

practices among the refugee returnees, in fact, may simply be seen as the reflection of limited options and extreme economic insecurity, with many returnees ready to adopt any strategy that seems to offer a possibility for survival. This was perhaps most clearly the case for many of the returning women, whose intensified efforts to eke out an existence in the informal sector or entry into jobs formerly performed by men may be interpreted not only as a sign of heightened
female autonomy, but also as a measure of deepening female impoverishment. The rise in the incidence of female-headed households among refugee returnees is a symptom in part of social collapse, as women find themselves either widowed, abandoned by or fed up with husbands who can no longer cope with household and family responsibilities. Thus, while the changes in gender relations wrought by social transformations in exile and on return may be the first heralds of a new age of equality, until that age dawns, many women seem to have been left with no other choice but to struggle along on their own.

Just as experiences in exile varied in terms of the reception refugees met with from local populations, so the return was marked by significant differences in relations with those who had stayed behind. While much has been written on the strength of the extended family and local kin groups in Africa, with facile assumptions that traditional solidarities will automatically be activated in times of crisis, the evidence from investigation into processes of resettlement in Chad demonstrates the need for more nuanced views. Returnees to the eastern Sahelian prefectures from the Sudan were generally able to count on a warm reception from neighbours and kin and to draw on solidarities that had remained intact as they picked up the pieces of their lives. Many returning to the south-west from refugee camps in Cameroon, on the other hand, met with hostility and suspicion on the part of some local inhabitants whose jealousy was provoked in part by perceptions of riches accumulated through assistance programmes in exile. Some returnees to this region of rich agricultural production had difficulty in reclaiming their lands; others simply felt ostracized both socially and economically and remarked sadly on the breakdown of any semblance of village solidarity. In the urban zone, N'Djaména

was the point of initial return for many refugees from Cameroon and Nigeria whose immediate reception was indeed facilitated by family and friends resident in the city. The warmth of the reception could soon be strained, however, as extended hospitality took its toll on both host and guest. The "extended family" could indeed become a burden in this urban economy where the cost of living had skyrocketed in inverse proportion to the deterioration of living conditions. In an exceptional experiment in the resettlement of refugees among stranger populations in the Lake Chad region of Karal, old ties of inter-ethnic co-operation were reactivated as the basis for land allocations by customary authorities backed by officials of the state. While this method worked without hitch for the first wave of settlers in the region, late-comers encountered abuses of the system as some residents saw opportunities to profit from speculation in land.

Conditions encountered on return thus varied from region to region. Sometimes the coolness of the reception accorded to the refugees by local populations dimmed the transformative potential of new experiences acquired in exile. Such was the experience, for example, of some returning professionals who found colleagues lukewarm or hostile to innovations brought from abroad. At other times, the very low level of development characterizing the regions of return placed limits on returnees' potential for action, while the development structures established in these zones were found to be weak and inadequate in comparison with those experienced abroad. Under such conditions, some returnees eventually chose the route of exile once again, as economic migrants in search of better possibilities. This last phenomenon clearly demonstrates the link between social uprootedness and economic underdevelopment that some programmes of assistance tried to address.

PROGRAMMES OF ASSISTANCE: RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT

It is clear from the research findings that the most effective programmes of assistance for refugees in countries of exile are those that respond quickly and efficiently to the immediate needs

for food, water, shelter and medical care while at the same time laying the groundwork for a return to self-sufficiency. Programmes that promote economic production on the part of refugee populations will be that much more effective if they also encourage refugees to acquire new knowledge and skills through the practice of improved productive techniques. These will not only allow them to support themselves more fully in the camp, but also help prepare them both materially and intellectually for the process of resettlement on their eventual return. The integration of refugee assistance programmes into the national development policies of the host country was found to be an effective way of easing not only tensions between local populations and "stranger" groups, but also the economic burden posed by mass refugee influxes. At the same time, some safeguards may need to be established to defuse potential for refugees to become merely a cheap source of labour to be exploited and abused in host country development efforts.

Policies promoting self-sufficiency among refugee populations should also look to the extra-economic dimension of refugee participation in the decision-making surrounding their lives in the camp. Empowering individuals through participation in decision-making has proved to be one of the most effective weapons against the passive mentality of assistance that can set in among populations receiving assistance for extended periods of time. Such participation should be encouraged as a vital part of a process by which individuals and groups regain a sense of control over their own lives and start to rebuild the fabric of a society torn asunder.

Because men and women experience the refugee situation differently, all programmes of assistance extended to refugees in exile need to be planned and implemented in a gender-sensitive way. Both the special needs and the unique resources of women refugees should be addressed in programmes designed on the one hand to respond to the vulnerability of women in exile and on the other hand to promote the full participation of women in activities in the camp. The social situation of women refugees should be carefully assessed and assistance tailored accordingly. Women who have become heads of household through the death or disappearance of husbands and other male kin should receive

special support in view of the increased responsibilities these women must assume for the welfare of their families. The manner in which cultural factors impinge on the lives of women must be given careful consideration in the formulation of policies of assistance. Women in polygynous unions, for example, may face particular problems if an overstandardized definition of the "household" is imposed as the unit for distribution of aid. Special measures may also be needed to ensure that women have a say in decision-making processes and participate as equals in productive activities and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Policies designed to encourage voluntary returns should recognize that reliable information on the situation in the home country is a vital factor in refugee decision-making processes. The strength of informal communication flows was a significant feature among the majority of Chadian refugees, who often gave proof of great ingenuity in confirming rumours of peace, gaining knowledge of food distributions, or verifying reports from official delegations sent to persuade them to come home. The need for independent confirmation that the time is ripe for return should be acknowledged as justified by national and international authorities. Consideration could be given to special measures to facilitate such informal flows of communication, particularly in closed camp situations. Special measures may also be needed to ensure that women refugees have access to all of this information and to promote their full participation in processes of decision-making for the return. Thereafter, programmes and procedures that aim to facilitate mass voluntary returns require careful co-ordination among the different partners drawn from local and national governments, international agencies, NGOs and representatives of refugee groups. Furthermore, because there is a tendency for the special needs of women refugees to go unnoticed by the largely male policy makers governing the returns, more women should be promoted to policy-making positions in both national and international institutions.

The complex and variable nature of mass refugee returns and the delicate processes involved in resettlement have several implications for policy. In the overall context of underdevelopment marking most refugee situations in Africa, the populations who

remained behind may be as destitute (if not more so) than those who fled the storm. It is clear that, under such conditions, assistance programmes that favour refugees to the exclusion of local residents are bound to provoke jealousies and resentments, triggering new or intensified forms of social conflict. Conversely, the failure to extend assistance of any sort on the mistaken assumption that local residents themselves will gladly come to the aid of their returning kin and neighbours will only result in added hardships for all. Relief aid for refugees must therefore be linked to programmes of development in the regions of return so that all may benefit from external assistance. Investments in social infrastructure such as schools, health centres and water works should go hand in hand with programmes aimed at stimulating production so that a dynamic balance is achieved. In the process, returning refugees may have many unique resources to offer in terms of experiences acquired in exile, a willingness to adopt new techniques and strategies and a heightened dynamism, all of which may be tapped as positive contributions to development. In the long term, however, numerous contradictions may have to be addressed in terms of the macro-economic policies that presently govern the lives of millions and set unacceptable limits to the possibility of sustained social development for all.

As with assistance policies in countries of refuge, development programmes on return must take full account of the needs and resources of women returnees. Noting a tendency to marginalize women as producers in many of the assistance programmes implemented in regions of return, the research team strongly emphasized the need to offer support for the vital roles of women in processes of both production and reproduction. Recognizing that these roles may have undergone extensive transformations and that women may have begun to assume greater (if not entire) responsibility for the welfare of their families, women must be involved on an equal basis with men as actors and beneficiaries in all economic and social development activities.

*Annex**

Refugee women

Personal itineraries

No. 1: Mme Djé, refugee from N'Djaména to Kousseri [Cameroon] and Gambaro [Nigeria], returned to Baltram (Chari-Baguirmi)

Before flight: *I lived with my husband, a manual labourer, and our three children in N'Djaména. My eldest son, when he married, went to live in Gambaro [Nigeria]. Two or three years before the "events", I had some problems with my husband and I left home. Then, when the big war broke out in 1979, I followed the others to Kousseri [Cameroon].*

In exile: *In Kousseri, before UNHCR came to our assistance, I had many activities, but the most important one was the sale of fire wood. Afterwards, my son in Gambaro sent for me and there I traded in sugar and learned how to prepare alcoholic beverages for sale.*

On return: *I came back on my own because the divorce had not been finalized. In N'Djaména, I was taken on as a cook in the prison. I worked there for two years and then they fired me. As I had learned that one of my sons had moved to Baltram [Chari-Baguirmi] for the cultivation of corn, which is quite profitable, I followed him. It has now been three years since I've been living in Baltram. Here, I have given up the preparation of alcohol to*

devote myself full time to growing corn and ground nuts. Now that I am old and my husband has not tried to get back together with me, I have assumed responsibility for my own existence. I am a member of a development group composed of 14 members — six women and eight men — that is called "Bardé", which means "calm". We have a collective field but have a problem in the lack of means of production. We work only with hoes whereas in Gambaro, draught agriculture is practiced.

No. 2: Mme Mo, mother of four from Moïssala [Moyen-Chari], refugee in Boubou [CAR], returnee to Sarh [Moyen-Chari]

Before flight: *I am from Moïssala [Moyen-Chari], the eldest in a family of four children. I married a soldier. When my mother died, I took in my two younger brothers, as my father was an alcoholic. At home I engaged in all sorts of commerce. Depending on the period, I prepared manioc paste rolled in millet leaves or* bili-bili *[a local alcoholic beverage made from sorghum], or else sold* karité *oil [from tree nuts]. We were travelling in Moguebo [...] when the "events" broke out. I followed the others to Modkoluou [Moyen-Chari], then to Boubou [CAR]. This name Boubou, which means monkey, was given to the place because it is filled with monkeys.*

In exile: *In the camp, UNHCR helped us a lot and, in addition, I made* bili-bili*, which brought in more money at first. It is thus that I had the time to give birth to my third child. UNHCR distributed sardines. Since in Chad we were used to sauces made of meat or fish, I was obliged to sell some of the foodstuffs distributed on the market of Boudayo [CAR]. Sometimes, in order to buy clothes for the children, I sold the oil or sardines. Sometimes, local people would come to the camp to sell us certain items.*

On return: *I was repatriated in 1987. My husband decided that we should come to Sarh [capital of Moyen-Chari], since we had nothing left in Moïssala. We lived in great hardship and one fine day my husband left and never returned. That hurt me, but I understand that he left because he couldn't stand seeing us suffer so much. He must have left Sarh for good, as I never again saw him in town, unless perhaps he was killed. I came to stay with a distant cousin who, I have no doubt, will not be long in*

speaking his mind — that is, in asking me to leave. I had two empty barrels and one or two large glasses. I was sure that I would be able to re-establish myself in preparing drinks in order to feed my small family. I was sure that one day my husband would return and we would live together happily again. For when he left I was pregnant; surely he will come to see his fourth child?

No. 3: Mme Ka, mother of four, refugee from Ndakonon [Moyen-Chari] to Fali [CAR], returned to Ndakonon [Moyen-Chari]

Before flight: *The man I live with is my second husband. I was married to one man with whom I had two children, but after four years of life together he left me. That was in Sarh [Moyen-Chari]. I never saw him again. They told me that he died during his adventures in Nigeria. He was a tailor. Then I remarried my present husband who already had one wife. I followed him in 1983 to Ndakonon [Moyen-Chari] where he is a farmer. In 1984 we fled from the hostilities.*

In exile: *We took refuge in Sido [village in the CAR] and were then taken to Fali [refugee camp]. There, UNHCR helped us a lot. In addition to their assistance, I prepared* bili-bili *and I helped my husband in the fields. But I had one problem, which was that my "rival" [co-wife] was very jealous, a condition aggravated by the constraints of exile which obliged us to live together in the same tent. She made my life very difficult and said that I was the one who had brought bad luck to their household since it was after my marriage that all the troubles started. In exile, I suffered horribly from the climate and always had a stomach ache. I was forced to work my own field because of my rival, but UNHCR refused to give me working materials because they only take into consideration the head of the household.*

On return: *We were repatriated in 1987 with a few things to live on while waiting to get ourselves organized. We returned to Ndakonon, but saw that there was nothing left — no house, no hoe — so we would have to start from zero. We decided to come live in Sarh [capital of Moyen-Chari]. Here I prepare* bili-bili *and sell ground nuts. I abandoned farming because I'm not good at it.*

In 1989, I left my husband because it was no longer working out between my rival and myself. Moreover, my peasant husband had difficulty adapting to life in the city and started becoming jealous all of a sudden. I've given up on men and have decided to live alone and raise my children. In any case, my commerce is going well.

No. 4: Mme Mou, widow, mother of eight, refugee returned from Daya [CAR]

Before flight: *I was a farmer. My husband and I were married when we were very young and have eight children who are all grown up today. After my husband's death, my eldest son took me in because I'm not as strong as I used to be and can no longer farm as I did when we were two. So my son who is a trader takes good care of me and in exchange, I look after my grandson. In 1984, when everyone was fleeing the hostilities, I also followed my son.*

In exile: *We took refuge in Daya [CAR], where my son followed an apprentice training course given by MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières]. We were well assisted in the camp and since my son worked in the clinic, I received good treatment for the slightest problem. Life in the camp was good, but that did not stop me from cultivating my own little plot of beans. Then, in 1987, I don't know why, my son decided we should return.*

On return: *Running on foot all the way to CAR and the fact of having lost everything had really weakened me. Thus, on return, I was always sick. My son was not able to build up his capital for his commerce. Considering that in the camp he had had time to take a second wife, life has become very difficult. As I can no longer farm, I decided to sell firewood. For this, I sometimes travel 14 kilometres round-trip in search of wood. A load sold gives me 400 FCFA [about US$ 1.34]. Sometimes it takes me four or five days to sell one bunch. I suffer terribly now. If I could die and join my husband I would be at peace. My problem now comes from the suffering I have endured without understanding the reasons why — my house burned, my few possessions gone — really, it's very hard.*

No. 5: Mme Moh, widow with no children, repatriated from Sido [CAR]

Before flight: *I was married at an early age to the handsomest boy of the village. He was a big farmer. After a dozen years of marriage, I had still not had a child, but our hard work had enabled us to buy ourselves three oxen, a plough and a cart. In the dry season we would go with the cart to look for firewood. After 22 years of marriage, my husband died of an unknown affliction, but before that he had dissuaded all the relatives who wanted to inherit our goods from taking me as wife [according to the practice of the* levirate*, common in some parts of Chad]. After this separation, I decided to live for his memory; that is why I am still single and without children. After my marriage, I became the richest woman in the village: I increased the number of oxen to five; each year I enlarged my fields; other people would come to rent my agricultural equipment. I was taking care of 12 children from my relatives or my husband's relatives. I had three or four big granaries in my yard. Then came the "events" of September 1984. I took flight, albeit a bit late, as I had thought they would spare me, given my condition of woman without husband or children and thus poor. But, alas, I saw my house burn before my eyes.*

In exile: *In the camp at Sido, I didn't feel up to anything. If I had still been able to retain the illusion of recovering my possessions, like some of the others, it would have been better, but my case was different. I drank, that's why. I, who never used to drink, started drinking alcohol in the camp and have continued up to now.*

On return: *Nothing has gone right since the repatriation in 1987. Accustomed as I am to ploughing my fields, I have a hard time working with a simple hoe. Also, I have no children, I feel discouraged and I cannot work like before. In 1988, I attempted to plant the roots of manioc which, with its leaves and tubers, is essential during the lean time, but in a single night, all my hopes fled. The field was completely ravaged by a herd of cattle that I had not seen. I'm sure that if I had seen those herders, I would have thrown myself upon them, even at the risk of being killed, as*

often happens. Now, I wish to die, for when I get even older it will be more and more difficult, as I have no one to take care of me.

No. 6: Mme Djim, widow, mother of six, repatriated from Poli/Faro [Cameroon]

Before flight*: My husband died a long time ago. My children are all grown up — the first two are married with children of their own. In 1984, when they took flight, they asked me to come along with them. And that is how I found myself in Faro. Even before taking flight I wasn't very strong. I cultivated a few ground nuts, just to eat. It was my children who took care of me.*

In exile: *The long walk and the difficulties we encountered along the way completely destroyed me and so in the camp I didn't farm at all. In addition to the assistance we received, I would go into the bush to look for tubers, partly to eat and partly to sell.*

On return: *I came back because the others decided to. But I greatly regret it. In the camp, we were aided, but here we have nothing. My children lost all the things they had left. They can't even manage to feed their own children sufficiently and I'm just one more mouth to feed. I was born in this village, but it's only after our exile that I have really come to know the village. There is no solidarity. People treat us like strangers, as if we were thieves escaping from prison.*

No. 7: Mme Lad, divorced, mother of three, repatriated to Tapol [Logone-Occidental] from Poli-Faro [Cameroon]

Before flight: *We belonged to the Protestant church. My husband and I got along very well. We farmed a common field, but in addition to that I had my own field of ground nuts. In 1984 when the hostilities broke out, I lost many of my uncles and brothers. And my husband took up drinking. Afterwards, each time we had an argument, he would insult me and my dead parents. So I decided in 1985 to follow the others to Poli-Faro [Cameroon].*

In exile: *I was one of the last refugees to arrive and the aid was drying up at the camp. We even had to pay for certain foodstuffs.*

So I took up petty commerce. I made fried doughnuts and peanut cakes which I sold.

On return: *When the others decided to return, I followed them. At Tapol [Logone-Occidental], everything has changed. There is no longer any solidarity as there used to be. We no longer visit each other; our meeting place is the market. Furthermore, I have suffered in particular because they say that I had gone to Faro to look for men and to get rich from UNHCR. Now I have a field, but production is not like it used to be, nor like it was in the camp, where there was a certain solidarity.*

No. 8: Mme Déné, widow, mother of four, repatriated to Tapol [Logone-Occidental] from Poli-Faro [Cameroon]

Before flight: *I lived with my husband who was then a farmer. After the sale of cotton, we would go to Moundou [capital of Logone-Occidental] to buy clothes and various products we couldn't find in Tapol. Our children were well nourished. Anyway, there was a lot of solidarity among the villagers. You could work with your relative's plough for free or, after the harvest was in, you could give him some crops. Then, I don't know why, in 1984 war broke out. People started killing each other and so I fled. I fled because my husband had been killed.*

In exile: *I followed the others to Poli-Faro. I didn't know whether my husband had been buried or eaten by the vultures. When I think of that, it hurts. I had to learn the news from others. In the camp, aside from the nightmare of my husband's death, I didn't have many problems. We were aided, my children received medical attention and went to school. Myself, I cultivated a field of ground nuts and maize, I prepared* bili-bili *and fried doughnuts that sold well. I even bought a little machine to grind the ground nuts. Then everyone in the camp decided to come back. Me, I didn't want to because of the great emptiness I would find — no husband and all my goods pillaged. But I couldn't stay in the camp alone, so I returned with the others.*

On return: *UNHCR had assisted us well, but back in Tapol, there was indifference. Those who had stayed detested us. They called*

us "Mai Faro", that is, the people of Faro. In the market, the price of foodstuffs was raised when we arrived. They treat us like rich people since UNHCR had given us a little money. I've taken up work on my field again, but it's not like before. In the dry season, I sell bili-bili *and fried doughnuts and rent out my grinding machine, That's how I am able to feed my children. When we arrived, village development groups were already in existence and, as some only admit single women, I joined one. We have a collective field of cotton. Work on this field takes up a lot of time and prevents us from giving serious attention to our own fields. What I wish for now is to have a pair of oxen and a plough. That would really help me raise my children. My eldest son is at school in Moundou [capital of Logone-Occidental]. If I don't give him enough help, he will get discouraged and will abandon his studies and become a delinquent.*

No. 9: Mme Ndom, divorced, without children, refugee in [CAR], returned to Moussafayo [Moyen-Chari]

Before flight: *I was married very young. My husband and I were from the same village. I never had any children, but we worked a lot in the fields. I had my own field of ground nuts and maize which I worked in addition to helping my husband on his field of cotton and millet. I gathered firewood that I sold in the market at Maro [Moyen-Chari], 20 kilometres from here. We were well off.*

In exile: *Then in 1984, we were forced to flee. Myself, I took nothing, thinking that we would return the next day to peace and quiet. However, it lasted for months and months. In the country where we sought refuge, we suffered terribly — no house, no food, almost everyone was sick. Children were dying day by day.*

On return: *Then we decided to return, but, in the meantime, all of our houses had been burned. There was nothing left, not even a single ground nut in the earth. It was very difficult. We ate wild fruits and roots that were sometimes poisonous and killed. Up until now, I can't seem to recover the strength I had before. Little by little, I lost interest in everything. Then, one day, I decided to leave my husband. It was useless to pretend — I no longer love him. He has become a lazy do-nothing and a big drinker of*

alcohol. Faced with starting everything again from scratch, he withdrew and now takes refuge in alcohol. One day, he caused a lot of trouble for the men of the village, You see, ONDR [the National Office for Rural Development] gives out fertilizer on credit and right after the sale of cotton, you have to pay it back. If just one person in the village defaults on his debt, the following year no one in the village will be given credit but will have to pay cash for the fertilizer. And my pitiful husband did what shouldn't be done, spoiling it for the whole village. Nowadays I make bili-bili *and during the rainy season I cultivate my field of ground nuts, but this time by hand. Twelve of us women have grouped together in a* tontine *[women's informal revolving credit group]. The other people pretend to like me, but actually they reject me because I deliberately left my husband.*

No. 10: Mme Fat, mother of three, refugee in [CAR], spontaneously returned to [Moussafayo, Moyen-Chari]

Before flight: *My name is Fatimé. My family is from this village. Very young, I was married to a soldier from my village and we served all over in Chad. The events of 1979 forced my husband and I to leave Am-Timan [Salamat] for Sarh [Moyen-Chari]. Life was very difficult. I returned to my father's village [Moussafayo] where I took up cultivation of sorghum and ground nuts for subsistence. Much later, with the help of my father, who is the chief's body guard* (goumier)*, I was able to buy two oxen. During the planting season, I would borrow my father's plough, which enabled me to cultivate two or three* cordes *[approximately 0.5 of a hectare] of cotton a year. My husband who no longer received his wages was obliged to join us in Moussafayo. I can say that we lived peacefully. My children attended school in the village and I would go to Sarh from time to time to buy essentials such as soap, sugar and salt. Then came the "events" of 1984. Soldiers invaded our village, massacred the young men and set fire to houses and granaries. It was thus that we were forced to flee with everyone else. My mother was trapped en route. She couldn't run like the others because of her age. I returned to look for her and found her along the road. She had been able to escape thanks to*

the smoke that covered the whole village. She had been accused of being the mother of codos*.*

In exile: *We fled by following the Chari River. Many children perished or were abandoned along the route. We stayed in the bush for three months. The village we finally reached was in the territory of the Central African Republic. There, we had a problem of water. The local people were hostile and we kept to the outskirts of the village for three more months. Then, with hunger gnawing and no longer able to cope, the older women decided to return, leaving the men behind to await the end of the hostilities. We came back without negotiation, without official repatriation and we came back to a country in ruins. Only the military barracks were inhabited.*

On return: *All that time in the bush, we had kept ourselves alive with roots and wild fruits. On return, we took two days to rest, then we began to look for straw to reconstruct our houses. After the negotiations, the men came back in 1986-1987. But, as for me, my husband still hasn't come back. I don't know if he is dead or alive. So now I raise the children alone. My parents are poorer than before. BELACD [a Catholic aid agency operating in southern Chad] has intervened to give agricultural equipment to a few groups of men, but for us women, we only once got some foodstuffs and then some seeds. Now, I've run out of steam. I can no longer work with the hoe as I used to. Sometimes, I go to work on the fields of others for 200 FCFA [about US$ 0.67]. This type of thing used to be humiliating for a dignified woman, but now it's accepted. My eldest son could stand it no longer and left us to go look for work with some rich merchants in Sarh. Many youths are leaving the village in this manner to go to Sarh or Bangui [CAR] — we can't do anything about it. Maybe these children don't understand why we've become so incapable, we who are their parents. I could very well start again with new energy, but I'm discouraged and afraid. You can see, there's fear in all the faces of the villagers. Me, I'm afraid that the troubles will start up again, since I'm not sure that the problem has been resolved. Furthermore, there is a real problem between us farmers and the transhumant herders. The herders generally pass through our villages during the harvest season and let their herds wander*

loose in our fields. If we say anything, we risk being threatened and killed. Last year, the herders took off with a cow that had been given on credit by BELACD. Four young men of the village followed them, but one of them was killed. For us, since we don't have a closed fence and since the granaries are of straw, organized groups come to steal during the night. For the granaries, we have found a solution; we put our seeds in sacks that we place on little shelves inside the house. Under the shelf, we build the cooking fire, the heat of which kills the rodents who are after the sacks. In Moussafayo, there are a lot of mosquitoes. We have no more mosquito nets or cups, so we set up some tontines *for which contributions range from 150 to 200 FCFA [from US$ 0.50 to US$ 0.60] every two weeks. Now in the village each family has at least one mosquito net under which huddle father, mother, children, dogs ... Sometimes only the head and the feet fit under the mosquito net.*

No. 11: Mme Haw, separated from her husband, mother of six, refugee returned to [eastern Chad] from Tandelta [the Sudan]

Before flight: *I was married with children. During the rainy season, we cultivated millet and when the waters subsided I worked my plot on the edges of the* ouadi *[humid depression]. The money obtained from these garden products enabled me to buy dishes and many other things a woman needs in her house.*

In exile: *In 1984, when famine struck, my husband said that he was going to look for work in the Sudan. I waited in vain for him to come back, then I followed the others as far as Tandelta. I didn't find him there and, as we arrived very late, we didn't receive any assistance. I worked off and on as wood cutter, water carrier, grain grinder. I took on all sorts of activities, but the proceeds did not allow me to feed my children. I wanted to come back to die in my country, but I didn't know the way back.*

On return: *Then one day a messenger from SECADEV [national NGO in Chad] travelled through all of the border villages to convince people to come back. I was among the first to return and because of that I benefited from a lot of aid in comparison*

with my other friends who came back later. Now I am a member of a development group.

No. 12: Mme Kal, married and mother of seven, refugee returned to [Ouaddaï] from Tandelta [the Sudan]

Before flight: *I was married very early. My husband and I worked the land to feed our six children. When the harvests were good, we could eat well up until the rainy season.*

In exile: *But in 1984, following the famine, we were forced to leave Ambsibekha [Ouaddaï] to go to the Sudan to look for food. All of our cattle had perished. Once in the Sudan, nothing worked. I pretended to be blind in order to have at least a little bit of left-over* boule *[typical Chadian staple dish, a dough made of millet or sorghum] for my last two children. Sometimes I would return with empty hands to the little corner in the bush that served as our shelter. One day, when I returned with my cup filled with rotten porridge, I found my second youngest child dead there where I had left him when I went off to beg. It was difficult to find a place to bury him. My husband had continued on to another village to see if he could find a bit of food. Thus I buried the child alone. Afterwards, I lost the last one too in the absence of my husband. My older children (aged seven to ten) worked in the homes of the Sudanese as "boys" [domestic workers]. I had been in the Sudan for two years when one day I heard that people were distributing food back home and that's why I returned.*

On return: *For the moment, I've taken up my old activities plus the gardening work that we do in groups created by SECADEV [national NGO]. The proceeds of the sale of onions allow me to feed and clothe myself and my children. But I'm very concerned about the lack of rain this year. I must do all I can to set aside a little millet for the lean season, for I am alone — my husband has still not returned. Is he dead or alive? God only knows.*

No. 13: Mme Kal, married, mother of five, refugee returned to [Ouaddaï] from Forobarang [the Sudan]

Before flight: *I was a farmer. I had been married for a long time and we had five children.*

In exile: *In 1984, my husband and children and I fled to take refuge in the Sudan. In the morning, my husband would go off to look for firewood and I would go from house to house looking for work grinding grain and ready to take on any other sort of labour. At night we would return to our miserable shelter where our starving children waited for us. Then one day my husband, who had gone to look for firewood, never came back. After four months of waiting in vain, I took the children and returned home.*

On return: *I came back at a time when famine still continued. Around Adré [Ouaddaï], the foreigners were distributing food and so I went there. Then, when happier times returned in 1988, I once again planted my flood plain crops which brought in good money that year. Currently, I am a member of a development group.*

No. 14: Mme Kou, divorced, mother of three, refugee returned to [Adré, Ouaddaï] from [the Sudan]

Before flight: *I was married and after several years of marriage, we had three children. But there was no understanding between us and so I left my husband. To make a living I engaged in petty commerce — salt, pepper, onions in the market of Adré [Ouaddaï]. During the rainy season, I grew beans and millet. The proceeds from my field were largely sufficient to cover my needs. My husband remarried, but I remained single. In 1984, famine struck the region. I sold everything, but finally I went to the office of the sub-prefect where they were distributing porridge to people. Each day the number of starving people increased and so we decided to go elsewhere.*

In exile: *And so I followed the others as far as Ndouki in the Sudan. For two months, there was nothing and it was only afterwards that the foreigners came to take us to the camp at Assirni. There we were assisted, but, as the numbers were growing steadily and food was becoming rare, I was forced to go into the bush to search for firewood to sell. The money I earned*

allowed me to survive while waiting for the rations. Then, some time afterwards, they decided to take us somewhere else. That's when I fled the camp to return.

On return: *What pushed me to return was the thought of my old parents who had stayed behind. We were also informed by travellers passing through that food had become abundant in Chad. I came back on foot. Once in Adré, I was aided by the foreigners who gave us dried meat, wheat and oil. I took up my old activities again, but the proceeds are not as before. Even when attending ceremonies at my relatives, I go with empty hands.*

No. 15: Mme Ach, mother of five, separated, refugee in Assirni, the Sudan, returned to [Ouaddaï]

Before flight: *I was a farmer. Proceeds were better then. I sold my crops or prepared the drink* bako *(a local beer) which enabled me to pay taxes and to clothe myself and my children. I also had a small herd in addition to my husband's herd.*

In exile: *With the drought of 1984, my husband took my "rival" [co-wife] and fled to the Sudan. I was forced to follow them with the children. But once in the Sudan, I was not able to find my husband. I fed my children with wild fruits* (mikhète)*. I got myself hired as a labourer on the fields of some rich Sudanese who lodged me, nourished me and gave me a little money for salt and other condiments, as well as clothes. They fed us well, which persuaded me to stay and work hard. If the work finished or no longer interested me, I would change bosses. The work instruments were the same as ours, that is to say the* daba *[short-handled hoe] and hoe. As I had been abandoned by my husband and life was becoming harder and harder in the Sudan, my mother sent someone looking for me. That's why I returned. I was very unhappy in the Sudan. In addition to working on other people's fields, I ground grain, which wasn't profitable at all. I also had another problem. They gave us cakes in which they had put preservatives that made us sick. It gave us constipation. Then, I dug up termite mounds to find the grains that were stored there.*

On return: *At home, I feel better. I can work the land anywhere and I am helped by my relatives even though this year the rains are not sufficient. It is better to stay than to go to the Sudan where I am considered a foreigner. But my children are not cared for. My husband chose my rival over me. Once back home, I lost my youngest child, but such is the will of God. He should have died in exile.*

*Translated from the French accounts in Nodjal and Passang, 1992.

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