

Is resettlement in a Western country the most viable solution for Protracted Refugee Situations?

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Abstract

This paper will focus on longstanding Protracted Refugee Situations (PRS) as opposed to 'regular' refugee situations, and analyse available solutions to them. It will consider the drawbacks of all three 'durable solutions' listed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): voluntary repatriation, local integration and third country resettlement. The central arguments of the paper are that repatriation and local integration are rarely available for refugees in PRS, and that resettlement can be a successful solution. With the assistance of research from interviews conducted with formerly resettled refugees and resettlement workers, it will use an example of resettled Bhutanese refugees closely to assess resettlement in practice. It will conclude that resettlement is the most viable solution for PRS, but should not be pursued alone to the neglect of other solutions.

Keywords: PRS, resettlement, repatriation, Bhutanese, solution

Introduction - searching for ‘solutions’: understanding the issue of Protracted Refugee Situations and why it is important

In October 2007, the United Nations (UN) special rapporteur on racism, Doudou Diene, condemned a campaign poster belonging to the People’s Party of Switzerland (SVP), which depicted a black sheep being kicked off the Swiss flag by three white sheep (Foulkes 2007: n.p.a)¹. Despite causing shock and disgust in some international circles, the SVP’s anti-asylum electoral platform managed to win for it the highest percentage of the vote that had been attained since 1919 (Troeller 2008: 51). The SVP campaign is not unique, but is illustrative of a broader trend in Western political arenas of a rise in ethnically charged, anti-asylum populism, creating increasingly emotive and controversial elections. More frequently, we can see political discourse and campaigning that ‘reaches beyond any current civilized norms and ... is reminiscent of Nazi propaganda’ (Troeller 2008: 53). In fact, in August this year measures were introduced in some Swiss towns to restrict asylum seekers from using public facilities and being in public places, justified by those such as the mayor of Menzingen due to the fact that ‘asylum seekers could meet our school children – young girls or young boys’ (Simpson 2013: n.p.a). Asylum seekers are often used as scapegoats for the myriad social and economic problems of Western countries, and this has led to policy changes that focus on containing refugees in their regions of origin so as to keep them out of the West.

At the end of the Cold War, there were many refugee crises stemming from the superpowers’ proxy wars in the developing world that remained unresolved. Changes in the nature of warfare along with an increase in intrastate conflicts with large numbers of civilian casualties led to further mass movements of people, adding to existing numbers as ‘the global refugee population mushroomed’ (Loescher et al 2008: 25). Attitudes in Western countries towards refugees began to harden as the numbers of those seeking refuge grew, and by the mid-1990s, states began to adopt more restrictive policies to limit the numbers on their soil (Troeller 2008: 44). Abolition of the right to work and reduced social assistance for asylum seekers, carrier sanctions, tougher visa requirements and interception at sea are just a few examples of policies the global North has utilised to discourage asylum seekers (Joly & Cohen 1989: 135). Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the Madrid and London bombings, immigration

¹ Please note that direct page numbers are provided wherever possible. Where they are not, ‘n.p.a’ or ‘no page-number available’ demonstrates this.

became ‘securitized’ – that is, migration was politically constructed as a security issue (Huysmans 2000: 751). Securitization and restrictive measures have not only encouraged public xenophobia, but have also led to Western governments attempting to ‘warehouse’ or ‘contain’ refugees in poorer countries (Joly & Cohen 1989: 135). According to analyst Troeller (2008: 64), warehousing has ‘undermined the international protection regime’ and ‘contributed to protracted refugee situations’.

Protracted Refugee Situations (PRS) have been defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as situations in which refugees have fled their country to seek asylum in another, but have become trapped ‘for 5 years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions’ (ExCom 2009: 198). There is a general consensus amongst analysts and international organisations that PRS are situations where refugees have become stuck in a state of ‘intractable limbo’, where they are not able to integrate in their first country of asylum, but equally cannot return to their unstable country of origin nor move on to another country to claim asylum there (ExCom 2009: 198, Long 2011: 1, Loescher et al 2008: 21, Betts 2009: 4, Crisp 2002: 1). Currently, more than 7.2 million people – over two thirds of the world’s refugees – are stuck in around 30 internationally recognised PRS, almost all of which are located in developing regions of the global South (Long 2011: 1). Typically, refugees in PRS remain in camps, but there are also refugees in PRS in urban or rural settlement (Crisp 2002: 1). The average length of time spent by a refugee in a PRS has seen a dramatic increase in recent times, doubling from 9 years in the 1990s to 20 years in the 2000s (Milner & Loescher 2011: 3). Now, more than ever, it is imperative to find a solution to PRS.

Unfortunately, solutions are not forthcoming – by their very nature and definition PRS are situations ‘without immediate prospects for durable solutions’. In its original mandate, the UNHCR is charged with ‘seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees’ (UN 1950: n.p.a). The UNHCR thus sees its ‘ultimate goal’ as finding durable solutions that specifically allow refugees ‘to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace’ (UNHCR 2012c: n.p.a). According to Stein (1986: 265), a durable solution ‘means the integration of refugees into a society’: either their homeland, their first country of asylum or a third country. For the purposes of this paper, a successful ‘solution’ refers to one that allows the refugee(s) concerned to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace, and to integrate into a society, giving them access to their rights as set out in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) – the right to seek employment, the right to freedom of movement, etc. This is distinct

from temporary solutions that merely protect the refugee in the intermediate term. The UNHCR promotes three permanent or 'durable' solutions for general refugee problems: *voluntary repatriation*, *local integration* and *third country resettlement*.

The Council of the European Union defined *voluntary repatriation* in 2005 as: 'the assisted or independent departure to the country of return based on the will of the returnee and his/her informed decision to return' (Refugee Council 2012: n.p.a). *Local integration* can be seen as 'an economic, social and cultural process by which refugees become members of the host society on a permanent basis' (Kibreab 1989: 469). In an ideal situation, this durable solution culminates in the eventual granting of legal citizenship and 'naturalisation' (Meyer 2008: 7, Kibreab 1989: 469). *Resettlement* is 'the transfer of a refugee from their country of asylum to a third country that has previously agreed to admit them and grant them a formal status – normally permanent residency with the possibility of acquiring future citizenship' (Refugee Council 2004: 4). The international community has favoured different solutions at different points in history, and academic analysis is also divided as to which solution should be adopted.

This paper will attempt to uncover whether resettlement in a Western country is the most viable solution for PRS. My hypothesis is that there are limited solution options for refugees in PRS; that *local integration* and *repatriation* are rarely obtainable, and that *resettlement* can be a successful solution. A case study of Bhutanese refugees and research from interviews that have been conducted with resettlement agency workers and refugees working for related agencies will be used to test the second part of this hypothesis, whether *resettlement* works in practice. The paper is structured in a threefold format. Chapter one will analyse the existing literature on solutions to the global refugee issue, to establish which of the three solutions academics favour, and what challenges to these solutions they present. The second chapter will then assess whether resettlement is the only durable solution for refugees in PRS. It will attempt to highlight the difference between PRS and general refugee issues: that for refugees in PRS, voluntary repatriation and local integration are not solutions that are readily available. It will draw heavily upon examples of PRS to provide an empirical basis for this hypothesis. The final section will argue that resettlement in a Western country has the potential to be a successful solution to PRS. It will focus solely on the case study of Bhutanese refugees, previously in protracted exile in Nepal, who have now been resettled. Prior to writing, interviews have been conducted with staff working for charities assisting resettlement and Bhutanese refugees who have established a new life in the UK. Findings from these

interviews will be used not to generalise a wider Bhutanese and resettlement-worker opinion, but to provide a valuable insight into the practical efficacy of resettlement. While Chapter two attempts to contextualise the literature on refugees and PRS and provide empirical examples, Chapter three focuses on interviews with individuals conducted by the author and others, in an effort to humanise the issues and move away from a top-down, academic-centred study.

1. Literature review – which of the three durable solutions is favoured by academics and what are the challenges to realising these solutions?

The study of PRS and solutions to them is one of the newest areas of forced migration research, and understandably there are gaps in the literature. Much of the research used to inform this literature review addresses solutions to refugee issues in general, while only some focuses on PRS specifically. The work by Crisp (2002, 2004) who is head of the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) of UNHCR, and Fielden (2008), is part of a wider effort by the EPAU initiated in 1999 to understand and attempt to resolve PRS. Since this work, ‘the notion of PRS has become an increasingly familiar feature of the discourse on international refugee issues’ (Crisp 2002: 1). Loescher et al (2008: 375) argue that excluding a few studies in the 1970s/80s, and the work by the EPAU, researchers have largely ignored the issue of PRS. The volumes by Loescher & Milner (2005) and Loescher et al (2008) are the outcome of a United Nations University research project, and present ‘the first major effort to draw together conceptual and empirical research on PRS’ (Loescher et al 2008: 16). More recently, the Refugee Studies Centre of the University of Oxford has begun to focus on PRS, and the paper by Long (2011) is part of this effort. Whilst most of the other literature included does not focus on PRS specifically, its findings and recommendations are necessary and useful to inform the following chapters.

The problem of finding solutions to refugee displacement has plagued the international community since the UN was created. Over the decades, different solutions have been promoted and presented as the ‘ideal’ or ‘optimum’ solution to the refugee issue. Between academics, too, there has been little consensus as to the preferable solution for refugees. Some analysts argue for the promotion of different solutions, but all acknowledge issues and challenges for each solution.

1.1 Issues surrounding voluntary repatriation

Rogge (1994: 46) argues that repatriation is 'in most cases clearly the most preferable option', but that there are difficulties in its implementation, meaning that it is 'not a simple "optimum" solution'. The 1990s was declared to be the 'decade of repatriation' by UNHCR, as it was promoted and became the 'default policy of the international community and the UN' (Toft 2007: 139). However, analysts support the claim that the focus on repatriation as the optimum solution has led to its, in some cases, forceful promotion. Literature has shown that repatriation should only be carried out if it is wholly voluntary (Rogge 1994, Zetter 1999). Katy Long (2011: 2,10) argues that the international community's pursuit of repatriation, 'to the exclusion of other alternatives' and its 'desire ... to point to a visible sign of a "resolved" crisis' renders the solution ineffective, as it is no longer voluntary. Forcible repatriation could endanger those refugees who may still have legitimate concerns for their safety on return (Crisp 2002: 21).

In addition, there is a consensus that, for repatriation to be promoted as a solution, the conditions in the country of origin must have changed somewhat so that return is safe. One of the most important principles in international refugee law is that of *nonrefoulement*. This concept makes it illegal for any state to return a refugee to a situation of 'danger in any manner whatsoever' (Takahashi 1997: 594). According to Takahashi, because states are bound by this principle they should not only refrain from returning refugees to dangerous environments, but also work to guarantee that conditions in their home countries are stable and safe before promoting and implementing repatriation (1997: 594). Takahashi argues for an 'objective and impartial assessment of the human rights situation in the country of origin, and an authoritative decision that conditions are safe' before any plans for repatriation are made (1997: 594). In situations where protracted conflict has only recently ended, or is still ongoing, diplomatic efforts must be pursued to ensure that any possible repatriation is safe (Loescher & Milner 2005: 75). The preservation of human rights must be at the forefront of such conflict resolution, as a *sine qua non* of repatriation (Vedsted-Hansen 1997: 559).

The UNHCR will facilitate the repatriation of those who request to return, even if it does not consider the conditions in the country of origin to have changed since the time of exile, or be safe for returnees (Zeick 2004: 36). In theory, it will only *promote* the return of refugees to a country it deems to be safe and stable; however some scholars highlight that it has broken this rule in the past. In Takahashi's aptly named article 'The Emphasis of Return over Protection', he argues that in its scramble to implement durable solutions and appease host states and

donors, UNHCR pursues repatriation programmes ‘at as early a stage as possible’, even if this means sacrificing the protection of refugees (1997: 595). Sometimes, in the quest to appear to be implementing durable solutions for PRS, the wishes of the refugees are ‘relegated to secondary considerations’ (Rogge 1994: 46). Loescher and Milner (2005: 75) highlight examples of this in returns to Angola, Burundi and Liberia while Harrell-Bond (1989: 42) cites the *refoulement* of Kenyans from Tanzania and the repatriation effort of Eritreans from Djibouti before the circumstances in the countries’ of origin had changed. Thus, there is agreement amongst analysts that repatriation should take place only when it is voluntary, and when the situations in the country of origin are safe and stable enough to allow mass returns.

There is also some discussion amongst academics as to whether return ‘home’ from long-term exile can ever be an appropriate solution. In a suitably titled paper, ‘Reconceptualising the Myth of Return’, Zetter (1999: 2) argues that after lengthy exile, a refugee’s ‘home’ can change distinctly – physically but also socially and culturally. Chimni (2004: 59) agrees, stating that ‘exile affects in a profound way so the meaning of home is transformed’. Repatriation, therefore, would require a person to ‘readapt’ to a life that is no longer familiar. In addition, for second or third generation refugees, who have grown up in exile and know nothing of their ‘home’ country, return can be riddled with difficulties (Chimni 2004: 59). Zeick (2004: 447) criticises the general assumptions that repatriation is the optimum solution and that all refugees desire to return, agreeing with Zetter that ‘home’ can be an irrelevant concept for some.

Alongside their arguments, many authors present a research gap. Toft (2007: 140) argues that repatriation has been ‘undertheorised’, and Rogge (1994: 14) agrees that there is ‘much scope for research on repatriation’. In particular, few studies have focused on what happens to refugees after repatriation (Allen & Morsink 1994: 1). There is little information as to the experiences of those who repatriate, since it is often assumed that their problems as refugees disappear when they return. It is worrying that the ‘decade of repatriation’ in the 1990s and the decision to promote it as the optimum solution was not based on a wealth of academic studies; ‘on the contrary’, Chimni (2004: 59) notes, it was a ‘poorly understood social and spatial phenomenon’. Repatriation has, therefore, been promoted in the past and is still favoured, despite a lack of research to test the common assumption that it is the best solution.

1.2 Issues surrounding local integration

Different forced migration experts favour local integration in the country of first asylum as the preferred solution to broader refugee issues. According to Crisp (2004: 6) and Fielden (2008: 4), local integration has the potential to be a successful solution, particularly when the refugees involved share cultural similarities with the host community, bring vital skills or move into areas with availability of land. Betts (2009) in particular argues for the enhancement of local integration as a solution, but only if it is coupled with heightened assistance from the international community and donor states. Toft (2007: 156) agrees with Betts' standpoint, proposing that donor loans or grants could go some way to balancing the economic costs of hosting large number of refugees.

Many commentators also recognised the need for refugees to be self-sufficient before local integration could be promoted as a durable solution. A major challenge for states hosting refugees is to convince their populations that their economic well-being will not be challenged by the presence of the exiles. In order to eliminate this threat, refugees need to become as self-sufficient as they can, so that the state and its citizens will accept the integration of refugees (Toft 2007: 154, Loescher & Milner 2005: 74). Donors, too, promote self-sufficiency amongst refugees so that they can gradually withdraw aid, and the refugees themselves are usually keen to 'earn their own living and retain their autonomy' (Harrell-Bond 1989: 51). To ensure self-sufficiency, Betts (2009: 5) suggests training refugees in securing their livelihood, education, health and other areas so that they can be "agents of development" rather than burdens'. If refugees are assisted to become more self-reliant, and if they contribute to local society, they can make their 'presence a boon rather than a burden', and local integration can work as a solution (Crisp 2002: 22).

Another point that is raised in the literature on local integration is that if agreements are made with host governments on the terms of the permanent settlement of refugees, they may be more likely to allow it, and this solution may be able to be utilised further. Jacobsen (2001: 3) argues that it is imperative to focus on the needs of the host country so that this solution can be acceptable for them and become durable. Suggestions of such agreements are provided by Toft (2007: 154), who proposes that in exchange for their residency, refugees could be 'presented a choice of assimilating to the host states' economy, language and other traditions, or be subjected to repatriation'. Whilst it is important that refugees attempt to integrate and contribute to their new society, however, I believe such assimilation policies can endanger the culture and heritage of refugees.

Authors such as Meyer (2008), Crisp (2004) and Jacobsen (2001) argue that local integration should be revitalised as the preferable solution to refugee issues. Meyer (2008: 22) and Crisp (2004: 6) use the existence of self-settled refugees to argue that local integration can be successful. Self-settled refugees are those who have gone against the wishes of host governments and UNHCR and settled unofficially. Whilst they lack political integration, many live peacefully and productively amongst local communities and are culturally, socially and to some extent economically integrated (Meyer 2008: 22). This leads analysts such as Fielden (2008: 18) to argue that local integration ‘can be the appropriate means to addressing the plight of long-term refugees’.

1.3 Issues surrounding resettlement

There is some agreement amongst academics that resettlement in a third country has the potential to be a successful durable solution to refugee issues. Writing as early as 1986, Stein (1986: 278) contends that ‘in assigning weights to durable solutions, non-resettlement needs to be rejected and resettlement restored’. Stein argues that resettlement is the most important solution as it presents an opportunity for Western countries to share the refugee burden with developing nations. ‘It is surprising’ he states, ‘how easily the industrialised countries have been let off the hook and allowed to exclude themselves from the search for durable solutions’ (Stein 1986: 278). Loescher and Milner (2005: 74) support this idea, commenting that resettlement can be a ‘tangible expression of international solidarity with countries of first asylum’. These authors also argue that the more that refugees are resettled in third countries, the more chance of local integration, and so durable solutions, than there is for those left behind in camps (Loescher & Milner 2005: 74).

The main problem with resettlement as a solution that is flagged up by most of the analysts who cover it is that it is heavily under-utilised. Long (2011: 11) calls this a ‘failure of quantity’, noting that due to its marginalisation as a solution, only 1% of the world’s refugees will benefit from it. Troeller (2005: 59) agrees, stating that ‘even in the unlikely event that current resettlement places were doubled or tripled ... it would not make a dent in providing solutions for the 7.7 million refugees in PRS’. The numbers of resettlement spaces open for refugees remains low, argues Toft (2007: 153) because of the financial costs of the solution and also because states fear that offering permanent status to refugees will ‘undermine the political, social or economic order within their country’. Whilst there has been a gradual rise in the number of resettlement countries working with the UNHCR to implement this solution,

there are still too few. Jacobsen (2005: 55) describes how, 'given the narrow quotas, the chance of being resettled is slim, and indeed many people in refugee camps think of resettlement as akin to winning the lottery'. The numbers that each country resettles are 'at best symbolic and at worst a fig-leaf obscuring serious questions about some states' own refugee status determination processes' (Long 2011: 18).

Yet analysts cite two particular examples of successful resettlement programmes. The plight of the Indochinese 'boat people' who fled after the fall of Saigon prompted large-scale resettlement programmes from 1979 to 1994 affecting over 2 million refugees, which has been referred to by Troeller (2005: 59) as the 'halcyon days of large-scale resettlement'. However, he accepts that these times are 'unlikely to be repeated' (Troeller 2005: 59). Indeed, Harrell-Bond (1989: 50) argues that 'very special conditions gave rise to the massive resettlement programme for Southeast Asian refugees, and it is unlikely that a similar situation will arise in the future'. This being said, some relatively large-scale resettlement programmes have been carried out since. The resettlement of Bhutanese refugees in exile in Nepal began in November 2007, and some 75,000 have now moved (Rayamajhi 2012: n.p.a). These examples are used by analysts to show that resettlement does have a role in refugee solutions.

It has also been argued that resettlement has been used as a strategic, political tool (Troeller 2005: 59). Western governments push for the promotion of repatriation and local integration as solutions to refugee issues to prevent refugees being 'sent to them for resettlement' (Stein 1989: 268). Once resettlement becomes unavoidable, donors ensure they can control 'both the number and composition of persons who will be admitted in any given year' by selecting refugees in countries of first asylum (Neuwirth 1988: 27). Ostensibly, refugees are selected for 'humanitarian reasons, but it has become rather obvious that decisions as to which refugee populations will be resettled are actually based on domestic and foreign policy considerations and are informed by a policy of "calculated kindness"' (Neuwirth 1988: 28). The decision to resettle Bhutanese refugees was one of 'political calculation'; governments want to be seen to be 'fulfilling their resettlement quotas by absorbing a group of politically unthreatening refugees' (Laenholm 2007: 59, Long 2011: 19). Indeed, more 'difficult' groups such as Afghans or Somalis are less likely to be the subject of large resettlement programmes (Long 2011: 20). Political selectivity reduces resettlement's effectiveness as a solution for all those in need. Resettlement should not become a 'panacea for migration management by states' (Wright 2004: 11).

1.4 Research limitations

There are also broader issues with research into refugee issues. Harrell-Bond (1989: 42) argues that too often assumptions are made based upon documents produced by international agencies rather than academics, and these can be censored by governments that restrict freedom of information, who can also deny the agencies access to necessary documents and interviews with refugees. Meyer (2008: 10), with reference to literature on local integration, agrees that ‘much of this research is based on data drawn from statistics, policy papers, secondary literature and interviews with policy makers and has less emphasis on the perspective of refugees themselves’. The field of research into forced migration is particularly complex because it ‘requires coherent and integrated research strategies which incorporate the knowledge, methods, theories and concepts of a number of disciplines’ (Harrell-Bond 1989: 42). Yet such cooperation between disciplines does not always happen.

This literature review has attempted to show the variation in academic opinion on the three durable solutions, and the issues that arise with regards to each. However, it must also be noted that whilst analysts have preferences and recommendations, most agree that no one solution alone will put an end to the global refugee issue. Alongside other scholars, Betts (2008: 360) argues that ‘successful comprehensive plans of action should draw on the whole range of durable solutions’. Moreover, the focus on durable solutions should not take away from the fact that only diplomacy, peacekeeping and an end to conflict can prevent further human displacement and refugee crises. It is because conflicts ‘have been allowed to fester for years, to gain their own momentum and to pass unresolved from one generation to the other’ that refugee problems, and in particular PRS, have become so severe (Crisp 2002: 20). The following chapter will attempt to show that, whilst academics can debate the best solution to refugee problems in general, those trapped in PRS have fewer options, since repatriation and local integration are rarely available.

2. Is resettlement the only option for refugees in PRS?

We have seen that analysts differ as to which solution they believe can best serve the needs of refugees. However, there is little academic literature on PRS and the best solution for those in lengthy exile. This section of the work will put forward my hypothesis that potential solutions for those in PRS are much more limited than for regular refugees; and that repatriation and local integration are rarely possible. This will provide the basis for the assertion that

resettlement is often the only option available for refugees in PRS. This chapter will first look at why repatriation is often not an option for those in PRS, namely due to continued conflict, a repressive regime remaining in power, or a government's refusal to allow refugees to return. It will then consider issues of burden-sharing, economic scarcity and security concerns, and argue that these factors have led to developing nations tightening their regulations and minimising opportunities for local integration for those in PRS.

Throughout this chapter, four different PRS will be used as examples. The aim is not to provide in-depth analyses of individual PRS: this is reserved for the case study in Chapter three. Instead, examples will be brought in to support different points, and have been chosen for their relevance in explaining those points. The displacement of Eritrean refugees in Sudan is one of the largest and longest-standing PRS (IRIN 2009: n.p.a), and is particularly illustrative of the problems surrounding repatriation when a repressive regime is still in power. The plight of Afghan refugees, who number some three million, in protracted exile in Pakistan is more widely known and equally important for study. It highlights not only the dangers of repatriation to conflict zones, but also the problems surrounding local integration. PRS in Kenya were selected for their extremely insecure and volatile nature, and the case of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal was chosen because of the government's unwillingness to allow repatriation for the refugees. These examples have been used to provide an empirical basis for broader statements, and demonstrate the serious and contemporary nature of the issues discussed. Whilst assumptions cannot be generalised to all PRS, similarities from four examples and arguments that apply to all can provide useful conclusions for the hypothesis.

2.1 Inability to return: conflict, human rights and repression

As demonstrated in Chapter one, voluntary repatriation should only take place if there is guaranteed safety for the refugees on return to their country of origin, if hostilities have ended and if their human rights will not be sacrificed (Takahashi 1997, Loescher & Milner 2005, Vedsted-Hansen 1997). For many refugees in PRS, the conditions in the country of origin and the causes of the original exile have not changed sufficiently, so repatriation is too dangerous to present a satisfactory solution. Jacobsen (2005: 8) argues that 'in most protracted situations ... refugees cannot go home because the war, conflict, or persecution of ethnic groups in their home countries is not over, and it is unsafe for them to return', and that this can be the case even where 'peace accords have been signed, and perhaps even where the government calls for refugees to return'. If the cause of initial flight was government repression or

discriminatory policies, clearly unless there is a change in governance and policies are reversed, it will be neither safe nor reasonable for the refugees to return.

The regime of Eritrean President Isayas Afewerki has been described as ‘one of the most closed and repressive ... in the world’ (HRW 2009: n.p.a), and has created large PRS outside its borders. Alongside the persecution of religious minorities and political opponents, widespread human rights violations and the control of the media, the policy of forced conscription has forced many to leave the country (HRW 2009: n.p.a). In a 2012 Resolution (A/HRC/20/L19), the UN Human Rights Council condemned the Eritrean government’s continuing human rights violations, including forced conscription and its ‘shoot-to-kill practice employed on the borders... to stop citizens seeking to flee their country’ (OHCHR 2012: n.p.a). Despite this ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy and other deterrence measures such as punishment of the families of military deserters ‘by association’, many do escape, and ‘Eritrea is now among the highest refugee producing nations in the world’ (HRW 2009: n.p.a). Sudan is struggling to cope with the growing Eritrean PRS problem in its East, and is more frequently responding by forced repatriation. The UNHCR has strongly advised against repatriation to Eritrea, arguing that the punishment on return for desertion is ‘severe and disproportionate’ and amounts to persecution (HRW 2011: n.p.a). Afewerki’s oppressive regime is very much still in control, and the punishment for desertion makes the probability of returnees facing danger on return very likely. Clearly, in circumstances such as these repatriation would not ensure safety and a durable solution, and is not likely to be favoured by the refugees themselves.

The existence of ‘pockets of resistance or ongoing conflict’ in countries of origin makes return undesirable and dangerous (Jacobsen 2005: 9). Many of those who are repatriated from Pakistan to Afghanistan, for example, are likely to face danger on return. While Western countries maintain that Afghanistan is better off now than before their intervention, the nation is still ravaged by conflict and instability, which can ‘threaten the safety of ... those made to return’ (HRCP 2009: 8). A report published by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) found that 82% of registered Afghans ‘did not want to go back to Afghanistan, citing lack of security, shelter and livelihoods as main reasons’ (HRCP 2009: 11). Despite this, the refugees are under mounting pressure to leave Pakistan. Refugees are often, understandably, unwilling to return if conflict persists in their home country. Whilst life in PRS is far from desirable, ‘most refugees are fairly safe, with access to schools and health facilities ... none of which is guaranteed in their home country’ (Jacobsen 2005: 9). Many adopt a ‘wait-and-see

attitude' (Jacobsen 2005: 8) and decide to remain in PRS, adding to the severity of the problem and diminishing the hope for repatriation as a solution. Zetter (2011: 8) argues that a similar resistance of refugees to return resulting from continued conflict and insecurity can also be seen in PRS containing refugees from Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In contrast, some refugees in PRS do want to return home, but do not have the option. Since its expulsion of the *Lhotsampa* ethnic group, the Bhutanese government has denied that the *Lhotsampas* were ever citizens, and has not allowed a single refugee to return (CORC 2007: n.p.a). Instead, it argues that many of those in the camps are not refugees at all, but are Nepali citizens who have moved to the camps to take advantage of the aid and shelter provided (Lama 2005: 288). In its first 'verification exercise' in 2001, Thimphu claimed that only 2.4% of the refugees in one Nepalese camp were ever 'genuine' citizens of Bhutan (Banki 2008: 3). Yet even the few who have been classified as Bhutanese citizens have not been allowed to repatriate. Attempts to negotiate the *Lhotsampas'* return and bilateral talks between Bhutan and Nepal have so far failed; Bhutan consistently stalls negotiations and seems to be 'biding time to see the controversy die a natural death' (Lama 2005: 290). Without a huge shift in government opinion and policy with regard to the exiled *Lhotsampas*, it is clear that repatriation will not be possible. The continuation of repression, conflict and the refusal of governments to facilitate return are common factors which prevent repatriation being realised as a solution for many in PRS.

2.2 The effect of an unequal burden

The inability of refugees in certain areas to integrate locally is another key reason as to why PRS become so intractable. Aptly put by Jacobsen (2001: 2), 'the promise of local integration applies to relatively few refugees in protracted situations today ... the preference is for temporary protection and restrictions on refugees'. The level of protection and assistance given to refugees once they cross a border varies from state to state. In general, hosts provide a much-needed respite for those fleeing persecution and hardship, but this is only intended to be temporary, and assistance for these refugees is left to international organisations to provide. There are vast differences between temporary settlement and local integration. Local integration is a permanent solution, and 'is not just about the refugees being there' (Meyer 2008: 6). Meyer (2008: 6-7) describes local integration as a legal process (involving the granting of rights such as the rights to own property and to seek employment and if possible

culminating in the granting of citizenship), an economic process (where refugees can have livelihoods and are able to become self-reliant), and a social process whereby refugees can contribute to local society and are not subjected to discrimination. However, imbalances in the global protection regime make it difficult for these rights to be realised in host states.

It is easy for Western states to argue that the best solution for refugees is integration into their first country of asylum when most of these states are in the Global South. Seven out of ten of the world's refugees are located in developing countries, meaning that the Global South hosts 80% of all refugees (Loescher et al 2008: 6). It is, therefore, states with the least resources and the most vulnerability to challenges to their sovereignty and capacity, to whom the greatest responsibility for refugee protection falls (Loescher et al 2008: 6). The West has the ability to close and manage its own borders while developing countries lack the resources to do this, yet by an 'accident of geography', they are situated closest to refugee-producing countries (Betts 2009: 5). When industrialised countries push for local integration as a solution, therefore, they are actually pushing for the containment of refugees in the global South and for solutions to be found there. There have been some attempts to increase cooperation between industrialised and developing nations, but the concept of 'burden-sharing' is not one that is recognised in any international laws or treaties, and is not adhered to (Betts 2009: 5).

As the West has tightened its borders, host countries have also become more determined to restrict the large numbers of refugees from settling permanently on their soils. Host states 'feel overburdened as rich countries strive to keep refugees out; there is the perception that there is not adequate burden-sharing' (Newman & Troeller 2008: 378). According to Harrell-Bond (1989: 53), 'restrictive practices have a tendency to spread like a contagion', and are imitated by developing governments. Crisp (1996: 12) argues that developing country 'opposition to local integration is a last-gasp effort to hold on to the principle of burden-sharing'. So, whilst temporary settlement sometimes continues, no permanent rights are given to the refugees, and they remain in the limbo of PRS.

2.3 Economic concerns

Few developing country governments allow permanent integration of refugees because of economic concerns. Specifically, there is concern over diverting resources to refugees when they are 'struggling to meet the needs of their own citizens', fear that refugees will put a strain on their already weak economies and that national development progress will be affected

(Crisp 2004: 5). Granting refugees access to land and jobs creates competition with local populations, many of whom do not have access to either (Stein 1986: 265). As a result of ‘the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes, proximity to conflict zones and/or involvement in the conflict, and public health crises like HIV/AIDS’, many host countries have experienced a decline in their economies and in their standards of living (Jacobsen 2005: 17). This creates local resistance to the channelling of resources to, and permanent settlement for, refugees. Most refugees come from a rural background, and typically refugee concentrations are in rural, peripheral areas of host countries, meaning that the communities that will come into closest contact with the refugees are those with the highest levels of poverty (Stein 1986: 265). The presence of refugees can create a strain not just between the refugees and the local population, but also between the local population and government, if it is perceived that the refugees are being treated with priority (Stein 1986: 274). In addition, host governments may be concerned that by channelling resources and rights to the refugees this will attract more, adding to existing protracted settlements. Economic concerns thus create ‘resistance to integration and pressure on authorities to segregate refugees’ (Jacobsen 2001: 22); the solution that is adopted rather than local integration is to ‘place refugees in designated areas where their needs can be met by assistance from the international community’ (Kibreab 1989: 473). However, by keeping refugees in camps, hosts prevent their integration and access to durable solutions (Meyer 2008: 19).

The examples of PRS in Nepal, Pakistan and Kenya are indicative of a broader trend in host countries – as numbers of refugees increase in these developing nations and the West does little to share the load, governments become ‘overwhelmed and feel that their resources are threatened’, encampment becomes the priority and the chance of local integration as a solution decreases (Banki 2004: 15).

Whilst Afghan refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion from 1978-1989 were met with sympathy in Pakistan and given rights to travel and work (Banki 2004: 9), refugee influxes since have overwhelmed the government and led to increased concern over the integration of Afghans. Pakistan closed its borders in 2000 (although large numbers have still been able to cross), and has tried to restrict Afghans’ opportunities to integrate (Banki 2004: 10). Alimia (2012), who has been collecting oral testimonies of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, argues that there has been ‘a complete 360-degree turn from the 1970s-90s, when Afghan migration was actively encouraged by Pakistan and the US’. Islamabad is increasingly restricting the rights of

Afghans, and they face daily harassment by police (Alimia 2012: n.p.a), reversing any integration that has taken place.

Kenya was also historically a generous host-state, allowing smaller refugee populations to integrate. However, after PRS build-ups from Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia in the 1990s, Nairobi began to restrict refugees and contain them in camps, allowing only those with permits to leave (Banki 2004: 14). The government fears the impact of refugees on the labour market, and has no incentive to provide employment opportunities (Banki 2004: 14). Amnesty International has condemned Kenya's move of Somali refugees from urban areas to the Dadaab camp complex, which is already extremely overcrowded (Amnesty International 2012: n.p.a). The Nepalese government, too, has restricted local integration as a solution in recent years. In the 1960s, Tibetan refugees were granted various rights and were able to achieve a reasonable level of integration in Nepal (Banki 2004: 7). However, the government has not followed this same policy with regard to Bhutanese refugees. Banki (2008: 3) argues that for the *Lhotsampas*, 'local integration ... is currently not a possibility', as they are 'confined to camps and unable to pursue secure livelihoods'.

2.4 Fears of instability: criminality, war and terrorism

Local integration is also resisted by host governments due to security concerns. There is often a belief that refugee populations 'represent a threat to local, national and regional security, especially in situations where *bona fide* refugees are mixed with armed elements' (Crisp 2004: 5). The administration of refugees is therefore delegated to security, rather than developmental ministries, and refugees are kept in camps with restrictions on their movement (Harrell-Bond 1989: 51). Such monitoring and encampment of refugees, argues Meyer (2008: 18), militates against local integration prospects. Governments may feel that they must protect their populations from 'dangerous outsiders, whether rebel insurgents or criminals', and that the only way to do this is to segregate refugee populations and prevent their integration (Banki 2004: 5). Many host populations 'believe that the presence of refugees is linked to the rise in criminal activity, delinquency, street prostitution, and drug proliferation' (Jacobsen 2005: 17). For example, mounting allegations of Afghan refugee participation in robberies, kidnapping and drug-smuggling in Pakistan has prompted some locals to demand that 'if it is not possible to repatriate them ... they should at least be restricted to their camps' (The Express Tribune 2013: n.p.a). Kirui and Mwaruvie (2012: 163) describe a similar concern of

the Kenyan government over 'banditry, cattle rustling and general violence in the district' that is a result of weaponry making its way across the porous border with Somalia.

Refugees can present a threat to national, in addition to local security. Armed elements in refugee populations 'invite military retaliation, complicate relations with other states and threaten host state security', causing many governments to be 'unwillingly drawn into conflicts with their neighbours' (Kirui & Mwaruvie 2012: 162). The relationship between Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, for example, was 'poisoned' when the former hosted refugees fleeing the respective genocides of 1994-5, as some refugees were regrouping and rearming to overthrow the RPF regime (Kirui & Mwaruvie 2012: 163). The presence of militarised Hutu refugees was also a key factor in the invasion of the DRC by Rwandan-backed forces in 1996.

Additionally, in the post-9/11 era, 'both asylum and settlement policy is driven by a fear of and attention to the possibility of harbouring terrorism within a refugee population' (Banki 2004: 15). Government concern over terrorist linkages has also created greater restrictions on refugees. Refugee settlements in Pakistan are commonly seen as 'hotspots' for terrorist recruitment and militarisation. In 2011, in reference to recent suicide attacks in the country, Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik ordered that 'there must be a complete restriction on the movement of Afghans because they are behind most of the terror attacks' (Baloch 2011: n.p.a). Malik also ordered increased scrutiny of foreigners' ID cards, culminating in the removal of some 90,000 (Baloch 2011: n.p.a). Similar worries are felt in Nairobi following the Al-Shabaab insurgency in Somalia and repeated threats that Islamist terrorist groups would invade Northeast Kenya and impose Shari'ah law there (Kirui & Mwaruvie 2012: 167). Kenya closed its border with Somalia in 2006, denying entry to thousands of asylum seekers, due to suspicion that extremists would gain entry to the country under the guise of refugees (Kirui & Mwaruvie 2012: 167).

Developing nations have, therefore, become increasingly concerned with the effect of refugee populations on the security and economy of their states. They have imitated the growing restrictionism of the West and, whilst they cannot always prevent refugees from spilling over into their territory, they can restrict them, try to contain them in camps and limit their rights. Clearly then, this limits the availability of local integration as a solution for many refugees in PRS. At the same time, whilst many conflicts are ongoing, and many oppressive governments remain in power either meaning that they punish those who return or refuse to allow them to do so, repatriation is dangerous and is not a feasible solution.

In all the case studies illustrated and in most PRS generally, there are, unavoidably, small numbers of refugees who *do* manage to achieve repatriation or integration. Excluding the Bhutanese example, some refugees repatriate spontaneously or with official assistance to their countries of origin, choosing danger and instability over an uncertain future in PRS. Others self-settle in their host country, moving to urban centres to work or falsifying documents to become citizens. However, obstacles preventing the successful implementation of both solutions mean that, for most refugees, there are no foreseeable solutions in sight.

3. Can resettlement be a successful solution in practice?

Third country resettlement, as seen in Chapter one, has been undertheorised and underutilised. However, academics agree that it has the potential for success (Stein 1986, Loescher & Milner 2005, Long 2011). Moreover, for refugees in PRS, it may be the only available solution. It is imperative, therefore, to analyse whether resettlement works – whether it is successful in practice. If our definition of a ‘successful solution’ is that which allows the refugee(s) concerned to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace, and to integrate into a society, giving them access to their rights as set out in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), then we must examine resettlement against this definition. In order to do this, this chapter will use a case study of resettled Bhutanese refugees, including findings from interviews conducted prior to writing. This example of resettlement has been chosen as it one of the largest of its kind since that of the Indochinese in the late twentieth century, and has also been hailed by the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as ‘one of the most successful’ (Rayamajhi 2012: n.p.a). This chapter will attempt to analyse critically this claim. It will first outline the methodology used for this chapter, and then provide a brief background on the Bhutanese situation and resettlement projects in general. The positive elements of Bhutanese resettlement projects will be considered, before turning to broader challenges concerning integration and the desire to return. Each PRS is unique, and requires in-depth analysis before any decisions on appropriate solutions can be made. Nonetheless, the conclusions drawn from this case study may have important ramifications for others.

3.1 Methodology

Primary research was conducted with the goal of obtaining specialist and experienced knowledge that would add empirical strength to the observations made in this chapter. A ‘purposive sample’ (Babbie 2005: 189) of resettlement agency workers and refugees working for related agencies was chosen for this study.

Respondent 1 is a resettled Bhutanese refugee who works as an interpreter for two charities that assist the UK government’s resettlement programme, and has been both chairperson and programme director of a Refugee Community Organisation (RCO) that works with resettled Bhutanese refugees in Manchester.

Respondent 2 is a project worker for a charity that assists the government’s resettlement programme in Sheffield.

Respondent 3 is also a resettled Bhutanese refugee, who was formerly an interpreter and is now a project worker for the same charity.

Respondent 4 is a resettled Bhutanese refugee who works as an interpreter and runs another small RCO in Manchester.

According to social research expert Babbie (2005: 252), ‘surveys are excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population’. Semi-structured, telephone interviews were the method of survey in this study. To guard against any potential psychological harm, no questions about respondents’ personal experiences of resettlement or their personal lives were asked. In the event, some personal details were shared, but since these were volunteered, it can be stated that the respondents did not feel it would harm them to do so. All respondents gave full informed consent to participation, after a brief on the study and the use which would be made of their answers. They were also briefed on confidentiality – it was made clear that their names and the names of the organisations they worked for would not be included.

It is impossible to observe or interview every refugee who has been resettled, or every Bhutanese refugee who has been resettled in the UK. However, by interviewing a small sample of those with personal or professional experience of the resettlement process in Yorkshire and Greater Manchester, we stand a better chance of aggregating the broader trends

of groups (Babbie 2005: 97). In an attempt to further strengthen the empirical materials presented in this chapter, secondary sources have also been used. Of particular interest is the research put forward by Gharti (2011), who conducted interviews with 27 Bhutanese refugees who had been resettled in Norway in order to establish their circumstances in Bhutan and Nepal and their opinion with regards to their resettlement. In an interview with Church World Service (CWS: 2012), an organisation aiding resettlement in America, two other resettled Bhutanese refugees make some interesting comments which will be drawn upon in this chapter. The paper by Susan Banki (2008) is a cumulative collection of interviews with refugees, interviews with international organisation staff and research in the camps in Nepal that has also greatly aided this chapter. A Home Office Research Study by Field (1985) has also informed this section. Findings from these studies will be used in conjunction with other academic materials, NGO reports and news articles, *not* to generalise to all Bhutanese or all resettled refugees, but to provide some useful points to assess the success of resettlement in practice.

3.2 Background

Western country governments agree to quotas of refugees from certain countries for resettlement within their borders. It is primarily the UNHCR that makes referrals for resettlement: they facilitate applications in camps, provided the applicants fall under the 1951 Convention definition of a 'refugee', and that they either have immediate protection concerns (their human rights are at risk where they are) or that they are in need of a durable solution because their situation 'is not secure in the long-term' (Refugee Council 2004: 14). UNHCR decides which state to refer the applications to, but the decision on which applications to accept ultimately falls to officials in the developing nation (Gharti 2011: 19). They may choose to conduct further interviews, medical and background checks and screenings before accepting applications (Wright 2004: 8). Traditional resettlement nations are Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, USA, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and New Zealand, but more recently nine 'new' resettlement countries have joined the list of countries with resettlement quotas, including the UK (Wright 2004: 10). The UK's resettlement programme is called Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) and was established in March 2004 (Refugee Council 2012a: n.p.a). Most resettlement countries have charities that assist the facilitation of resettlement programmes and the integration of refugees. The UK Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002) allows for funds to be allocated to

organisations carrying out resettlement programmes (Wright 2004: 13). As such, there is a partnership between seven Home Office funded, UK-based NGOs to carry out this work: Refugee Council, Migrant Helpline, Refugee Action, Red Cross, Refugee Housing Association and Scottish Refugee Council (Refugee Council 2012a: n.p.a).

Since the initiation in 2007 of third country resettlement for Bhutanese refugees from PRS in Nepal, some 75,000 have been resettled in various countries, around 257 of whom have moved to the UK (Rayamajhi 2012: n.p.a). The refugees are from one of the three major ethnic groups in Bhutan, called *Lhotsampa*, and are originally of Nepali ancestry. The *Lhotsampa* fell victim to increasingly repressive government policies during the 1980s. The 'state-sponsored Bhutanisation drive epitomised in the promulgation of *Driglam Nam Za*' or *code of social etiquette* (1989), placed restrictions on the *Lhotsampas*' use of their ethnic Nepali language and traditional customs (Joseph 2013: n.p.a). The ruling *Drukpa* majority responded to organised *Lhotsampa* resistance with violent clashes and in 1990 many were forced to sign 'voluntary migration certificates' (Gharti 2011: 40). Those who were not forced to leave fled in fear of arrest and detention without trial, as nearly one-fifth of the population of Bhutan exited the country (Sarkar 2011: n.p.a). Some 125,000 exiled refugees made their way through India and settled mainly in the eastern Nepali districts of Morang and Jhapa in seven camps, where they remained subsequently prior to resettlement (Joseph 2013: n.p.a).

In the previous chapter, Bhutan was identified as a PRS where repatriation and local integration has not been possible. Indeed, when asked their opinion on whether local integration could be a solution, all three respondents who had been in camps in Nepal themselves responded similarly. Respondent 3 stated that 'there have been the camps in Nepal for about 23 years ... it's been possible only because of the international community ... Nepal government is not able to do anything towards it'. Respondent 1 agreed that 'Nepal is an underdeveloped country; it has its own situations and difficulties'. The two refugees speaking to CWS also mentioned the instability and hardship of their life in Nepal: 'we got vegetables once a month, I guess ... we ate rice for breakfast, lunch and supper' (CWS 2012: n.p.a). To further confound this situation, as we have seen the Bhutanese government has refused to allow the repatriation of any *Lhotsampa* and is stalling negotiations. It was against this background that plans for resettlement programmes began to be made. 'Many bilateral talk was done between Nepal government and Bhutan government, but it was not possible, and at last in 2007, resettlement programme was brought ... and slowly, slowly all the people started to fill out the forms' (Respondent 1).

3.3 'Success' – access to Convention rights and a chance to rebuild

A theme underlying this paper and central to an interest in resettlement as a solution is the argument that its use may reduce Western 'restrictionism' and presents an opportunity for Western nations to share their part of the refugee burden. It has become increasingly hard for people to claim asylum in developed countries and more difficult for them to gain status. In the UK, even for those who are lucky enough to be granted Refugee Status through regular asylum routes, the length of residency this status allows has been capped from an indefinite period to five years, after which they must apply for further leave to remain. It is necessary to find an alternative route for people in need of protection, and resettlement presents a way for those in need to sidestep ever-tightening regular immigration systems. As applicants have to be accepted as refugees by the UNHCR before being referred, once resettled they already have this status and the benefits it brings such as access to social welfare and permission to work. They are, as Wright (2004: 10) states, 'simply further along in the process of realising their legal right to seek safe-haven'. Quite literally, the GPP presents a 'new gateway for those seeking to settle in Britain' (David Blunkett in Wright 2004: 13). Resettled refugees, furthermore, are given *permanent* residence status and can continue to stay in their new country for any period of time they choose (Wright 2004: 10). They are allowed to work, practise their own religion, access legal assistance and courts, and receive similar public services and social benefits as nationals. Field (1985: 11) argues that 'resettlement in its broadest sense involves refugees obtaining the status of other members of the community'. Therefore, resettlement meets part of our definition of success since refugees are able to access their rights as set out by the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951).

Resettlement also presents a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace. The work of local NGOs in supporting newly settled refugees is vital to achieving this. The initial settlement period is key, as a 'period of re-socialisation during which refugees become familiar with their new way of life and learn necessary economic & social survival skills in order to gain a foothold in the unfamiliar social structure' (Neuwirth 1988: 35). The first few months can be overwhelming for new arrivals, particularly coming from refugee camps where they have lived for the last 20 years. 'There's so much to learn from how to get the bus, how to boil a kettle ... and for us to be able to explain stuff and I guess be able to hold their hands through those initial scary things ... I think that's probably the most helpful thing' (Respondent 2). In the UK, the work of those assisting resettlement varies according to organisation and region, but some key roles are similar. 'Comprehensive support packages'

are given to newly resettled refugees, whereby an organisation will support a group for a set period of time – 12 months for Bhutanese in Sheffield but 8 for those under the care of a different organisation in Manchester (Respondent 2). The care package is eventually tailored to individual needs, but initially all refugees receive similar assistance accessing mainstream services. Respondent 1 spoke highly of this support: ‘our people in the UK are very much grateful. When we arrived here, no-one was there to see after us, only [NGO name], and they did many things. They register us in GP, school, ESOL classes, showed us market, taught us how to catch the bus, those basic things. So we are very much grateful. To [second NGO name] too, our people in Sheffield are happy.’

When asked if they believe that resettlement has allowed Bhutanese refugees to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace, Respondent 3 replied ‘certainly ... the positive aspect of the project is that the clients are in the safe place. They don’t have internal fear of any danger that they were when they were in the camp’. Safety is, thus, the first step in a lengthy process of rebuilding their lives. ‘For refugees, having personally experienced this myself, starting from thinking “oh I have a house”, that’s huge thinking you know? Families, we hear them talking that “oh my children are in school and they study free of cost” ... it’s so much peace of mind at least, and the family could think that their children are in the better place and will have better future’ (Respondent 3). Research from other sources also supports this view. Gharti (2011: 12) states that ‘the Bhutanese refugees that have been resettled in Norway show a high degree of satisfaction. They have access to facilities ... to a degree that they couldn’t dream of having in Nepal’. Similarly, both refugees interviewed by CWS stated that resettlement in the USA presented the chance to ‘start life again with respect and dignity’ (CWS 2012: n.p.a).

3.4 Where ‘success’ becomes ambiguous – ‘integration’

In general, integration is an element in our definition of ‘success’ which is much harder to measure and to achieve. The aim of the support packages given by NGOs is to help the resettled refugees ‘integrate into life in the UK ... with the aim of by the 12 month mark to help people be independent, to help them access things by themselves’ (Respondent 2). In a ‘Resettlement Handbook’ designed to guide the reception and integration of resettled refugees, UNHCR outlines nine ‘goals for integration’ (UNHCR 2002: 17). Most of these goals are achieved by resettlement programs, due to the rights given to refugees and the ‘provision of transitional services’ (Wright 2004: 9). Two goals, however, are more problematic (numbers 1 and 6). The first goal is ‘to restore security, control and social and

economic independence' to the refugees, and the sixth is 'to promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems' (UNHCR 2002: 17).

With regard to cultural issues, integration must be a 'two-way process' which requires acceptance of refugees by the host community, and for the refugees to mix 'with the majority culture without losing [their] own culture and distinctiveness' (Gharti 2011: 73). Preservation is not, as Respondent 1 states, about 'being conservative', but is wider: 'our children, we want to teach them something. Nowadays, our children are getting past age seven, and teachers are teaching about religion and asking them, 'your religion is Hindu, then what do you know about Hindu[ism]? And they don't know.' One resettled refugee echoed similar concerns to CWS interviewers, stating that whilst she is keen to apply for full American citizenship, she does not 'want to go enrol in someone else's culture and then forget mine' (CWS 2012: n.p.a). Most respondents agreed that resettlement presented a cultural shock for Bhutanese refugees, and that at first many were unsure as to cultural norms and rules regarding religion. Respondent 1 spoke on behalf of his experiences and that of others: 'we don't know in the new country whether the government will allow us to celebrate our culture or not ... it is very difficult in a new place'. Similarly, Respondent 4 mentioned initial cultural shock but stated that 'now, [the refugees] have learned that they can practise at home, and they have identified many temples of their religion, so now ... they are finding their lives a bit easier'. Whilst initial cultural shock seemed to be prevalent amongst the refugees, they may be overcoming this and achieving this goal of integration better. Various 'self-help' RCOs have been set up by refugee groups themselves, to assist with day-to-day problems but also to preserve culture and promote awareness. Two of the respondents are active in such organisations in the Bhutanese communities. Respondent 4 spoke of the important role such organisations play in 'preserving our religion, culture ... and safeguard[ing] our mother tongue for the younger generation'. Indeed, RCOs are 'one way in which refugees can ease the functional and social burdens of acculturation' (Wright 2004: 28).

Security comes hand in hand with their life in a new country, but control and independence, the other elements of the first UNHCR goal, are much harder to achieve. Both these factors are hindered by language barriers and difficulties in obtaining employment. Before being resettled, the refugees 'were not exposed to the English language like they speak in the UK. Even for the educated ones, it was very difficult for them to understand English when they first arrived' (Respondent 4). The challenge of learning a new language is even more daunting

for those resettled in countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands or Norway (Respondent 1). Yet without language skills it is immensely hard for refugees to be independent. One interviewee highlighted this as she described the struggle of some refugees to buy groceries: 'if you can't speak the language the best way to do shopping is to take 100 or 200 kroner with you and just give the money to the cashier ... you neither have to speak with them nor have to ask for the total amount of money' (Gharti 2011: 67). Clearly then, inability to speak the language of their new country can restrict the control refugees have over independent transactions and social settings, and can limit their integration.

Failure to find employment in their new country of residence can also limit the extent to which a refugee is independent and in control of their life, and this reduces integration. Tied into this is the huge issue of refugees' expectations of what life will be like in their destination country. According to Respondent 2, managing expectations is one of the biggest challenges for resettlement workers. 'A lot of people assume that life in the UK is going to be very easy, that the streets are paved with gold. So it's quite difficult to help people manage those expectations, and people can get quite angry and frustrated when things take longer than how long they want it to take' (Respondent 2). A study on refugees prior to resettlement in New Zealand similarly found that 'most interviewees felt that within a short period of their arrival ... a job would be brokered for them through a government agency' (Ferguson 2011: 2).

Most refugees, after decades of being dependent upon UNHCR hand-outs in camps for survival, are keen to work and become financially independent. For people who have been 'powerlessly dependent on the benevolence of the receiving country, the psychological value of obtaining a job will be greater even than for an unemployed indigenous worker' (Field 1985: 27). 'Our people do not want to be living off benefits for long ... they always want to continue to work, whatever the work may be. But it is really difficult for them to get jobs' (Respondent 4). When asked how many Bhutanese refugees they knew had been able to find employment, Respondent 1 could think of ten, some of whom had found work in a restaurant but most of whom were working in a factory. The reason these people had found work in a factory, he argued, was because the owners were from India and so language similarities made this easier (Respondent 1). Respondent 4 could only think of two peers who had found permanent employment. Similar findings were drawn in Norway, as 'among the 27 refugees who were interviewed, the majority said they don't have enough money to support their family' (Gharti 2011: 75). Ferguson (2011: 6) also found that 'with the exception of two, none of the interviewees had gained any employment since arriving in New Zealand', despite

their reluctance to 'remain on benefit and desire to be independent'. For those who do manage to get work, accessing professional or managerial occupations requires high language skills, and many previously-qualified refugees face 'downward occupational mobility' as they cannot easily transfer their occupations or qualifications (Field 1985: 28). Obtaining employment is important not just for economic security, but also for improving independence in general, as 'a job will often provide a context where the refugee can improve language skills and come to terms with the social environment of the receiving country' (Field 1985: 27).

Whilst support from resettlement NGOs is vital, ultimately it is up to the refugees themselves to become integrated and independent. This is a process that takes time: 'integration is more than a 12-month process. You can still be integrating after living in the UK for five years, ten years' (Respondent 2). According to Field (1985: 11), 'most refugee groups from the third world, disadvantaged by poor English, lack of education and relevant job skills, by the trauma of the refugee experience itself, and sometimes by racial discrimination, will not achieve equality at least in the first generation'. Nonetheless, the resettlement of Bhutanese people in the UK is still a recent endeavour, and even if integration has yet to be realised, this does not mean it has not been successful.

3.5 The desire to return 'home'

Resettlement should be a permanent solution, yet many refugees feel a desire to return to their countries of origin, suggesting that they only view their resettlement as temporary. If the refugees themselves do not see their resettlement as the ultimate solution to their displacement, does this mean it has not been successful? Respondents were asked, if circumstances in Bhutan changed and the government allowed repatriation, whether they thought many refugees would return. 'Yeah definite. Maximum people they loved our country Bhutan because it is the birthplace, and people want to go back again' (Respondent 1). 'Definitely. When the situation is favourable for repatriation to Bhutan, I think they would love to go back' (Respondent 4). The desire to return, however, can be elusive. Respondent 3 argued that there would be little chance for people to live such a life as they had in their homeland many years ago. For younger generations, longing for what is familiar and what is home may create a desire to return to Nepal, rather than Bhutan, of which they have no recollection (Respondent 2). Yet even this desire can change over time, as younger generations grow accustomed to Western lifestyles. Speaking of his own experiences,

Respondent 1 states that he and his generation are growing used to their new country, 'but the feelings come slow. The place where I [was] born, where I play, many things I miss. My relatives are there. But my children, the younger generation, they don't have those feelings, because they live in the camps which was horrible life'. For the Bhutanese, the situation will not allow for repatriation any time soon. Yet this does not mean that all the refugees have all succumbed to their fate and given up hope of return. A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report noted that 'despite Bhutan's intransigence of the past 15 years, refugees have not given up hope that one day they will be allowed to return to Bhutan' (HRW 2007: 54).

3.6 Controversies over resettlement

In the initial hypothesis that resettlement can be a successful solution for refugees in PRS, controversies over its implementation, especially charged in this case study, were not acknowledged. Further investigation found resettlement to be a particularly contentious and divisive issue for Bhutanese refugees, particularly in camps in Nepal. In the resettlement pamphlets distributed in Nepal, UNHCR insisted that resettlement was 'not intended to prevent you from repatriation to your home country'; however many refugees now feel that as numbers in camps dwindle, there will be less pressure on the government of Bhutan to allow returnees (Banki 2008: 18). By reducing the number of people in this protracted situation and focusing on resettlement, the international community is alleviating Bhutan of responsibility for its actions which is a 'blessing in disguise for Bhutan, Nepal and India as it will "resolve" the problem without affecting their interests and concerns' (Joseph 2013: n.p.a).

It is to be expected that in a PRS which originally numbered over 100,000 people, that there would be differences of opinion with regard to resettlement (HRW 2007: 51). Yet 'whilst most refugees who rule out resettlement for themselves have no objections to others being resettled, a vociferous and influential minority is opposed to resettlement ... for all refugees' (HRW 2007: 61). Before resettlement was widely implemented, these divisions created a 'highly charged camp atmosphere' with frequent violence and threats from anti-resettlement activists in an attempt to silence proponents of resettlement (Banki 2008: 6). One of the most prominent anti-resettlement activists is former politician and political prisoner in Bhutan, Tek Nath Rizal. In an interview with Susan Banki (2008: 18), Rizal argued that the promotion and implementation of resettlement diminishes concern for those who are still inside Bhutan. Some 60,000-120,000 *Lhotsampa* remain in Bhutan, where they face 'persistent discrimination and ongoing threats to their citizenship status' (HRW 2007: 27). During

interviews with HRW, many *Lhotsampa* who remained in Bhutan described how ‘fifteen years after the mass eviction of their fellow ethnic Nepalis, they continue to suffer discrimination in almost all aspects of their daily lives’ (HRW 2007: 28). Resettlement, therefore, may alleviate responsibility from Bhutan for the exiled refugees, reduce pressure to facilitate repatriation and leave those who remain in Bhutan in a perilous position with little international assistance.

Just as repatriation and local integration are complex processes and hold difficulties, so too does resettlement. Refugees are given access to legal rights and are able to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace, but their integration is a complex process. Language barriers and employment difficulties prevent social and economic independence, and this can prevent refugees from properly integrating and contributing to their new society. Despite their level of integration, many refugees still long for repatriation, and await this as their final solution. In this case study, the focus on resettlement created animosity and division on the ground in Nepal, and has reduced the likelihood of the international community pursuing other avenues such as repatriation. Although the promotion of resettlement of Bhutanese has effectively allowed Bhutan to expel the *Lhotsampa* without strong international repercussions, it has also created the opportunity for refugees to restart their lives in safety, as opposed to remaining in a PRS where they are ‘held hostage to the outcome of negotiations with a government that has signalled time and time again that it is not willing to change its position and allow repatriation’ (HRW 2007: 63). After all, repatriation has not been possible so far and may not be possible for decades to come. In this situation, is it fair to force families to remain encamped and in limbo, with little but the hope of one day finding a permanent solution? This argument may present important conclusions for other PRS: resettlement can remain underutilised due to its complex nature and the possibility of it diminishing chances of repatriation, or it can be implemented, at worst guaranteeing safety but preventing repatriation (that may in any case never happen) and at best allowing integration, stability and security for generations of refugees.

Conclusion

The PRS phenomenon is one which has grown in significance and become more intractable, but as of yet only a handful of academics have acknowledged this. It is not widely considered a matter of urgency for which immediate solutions are required, in comparison to mass refugee influxes following international crises. Repatriation is seen as the logical solution for

refugee issues, despite the lack of research into refugee experiences on return. Indeed, many refugees do retain a strong desire to return home, and see this as the ideal solution, but this is not universal. For some, 'home' may be associated with the trauma of their exile, and others may have never stepped foot in their 'home' country, and thus have no desire to 'return'.

The trend towards anti-asylum populism in Western countries is exemplified in the tightening of border controls and the promotion of local integration and repatriation as solutions. Yet despite the aim of the industrialised North to contain the refugee problem in the developed world, its efforts have had the opposite effect. 'Restrictionism' has spread like a contagion, as poorer nations have felt over-burdened and attempted to imitate the same control that the Western world is enforcing over immigration. Whilst many countries in the Global South were previously accommodating of refugee populations and integrated many, they now warehouse refugees in camps and limit their freedoms. Concern over economic scarcity and security threats (real and perceived) has meant that hosting is more frequently provided only on a temporary basis. These worries have also led to lax enforcement of the principle of *nonrefoulement*, and increased cases of forced repatriation. The ideal preconditions to repatriation, such as diplomacy and 'an authoritative decision that conditions are safe' (Loescher & Milner 2005, Takahashi 1997) are rarely realised. Some refugees in PRS are forcibly returned to countries where they face a high risk of danger, for example the Eritreans who are increasingly being repatriated from Sudan against their will. There is no doubt that a solution must be sought fast for those who have spent large portions of their lives in protracted exile, yet the search for speedy solutions should not sacrifice the safety of refugees. Third country resettlement is not a quick-fix solution; it is a lengthy and expensive process that requires coordination from international organisations, NGOs, governments and the refugees themselves. Nonetheless, it is the only durable solution that presents an opportunity for industrialised nations to play a more direct role in refugee protection and share their part of the refugee burden, a burden for which they have been avoiding responsibility for decades. The Bhutanese case study is rather unique, in that the government of Thimphu has completely denied that the *Lhotsampa* were ever citizens and has refused to allow any to return for more than two decades. This has heightened concern over the status of the *Lhotsampa* refugees and created two particularly charged schools of thought regarding resettlement and repatriation. Although resettlement should not rule out the future potential of repatriation for refugees, many feel that it will remove pressure on Thimphu and endanger the *Lhotsampa* who remain in Bhutan. For every PRS, efforts should be made to utilise all solutions; no one solution should be pursued to the exclusion of others. Crisp (2004: 7) succinctly states that 'the search

for durable solutions to refugee problems is not a zero-sum game, with one strategy precluding the other'. The fact that local integration and repatriation may not be possible or would endanger the refugees does not mean that they should be ignored; efforts should be made so that they can become possible and safe options in the future.

By analysing the Bhutanese case study in depth and using conclusions from interviews and other research, we can see that resettlement is not a problem-free solution. Barriers concerning language and employment complicate independence and integration, and some refugees want to return to Bhutan despite their new status in resettlement countries. If resettlement quotas are, as Long (2011: 19) argues, 'politically selective', than the selection of the politically-neutral Bhutanese refugees may be motivated more by developed nations' desire to 'tick a box' rather than to make any real difference by opening up domestic immigration channels.

Nonetheless, these issues do not render resettlement redundant or mean that it cannot be a successful solution for some refugees. Most importantly, it provides the opportunity for refugees to rebuild their lives in dignity and safety. By giving refugees not only Convention rights but also similar rights to indigenous citizens, resettlement provides the first step towards a secure and stable life for them and their future generations. Despite its flaws, resettlement is a solution that can offer a way out for those who have been waiting for any change in circumstances that will allow them to start again and plan for the future. Some refugees have, and more will, live and die knowing nothing but a refugee camp. Waiting for repatriation or local integration to become possible only prolongs the 'refugee life' of camp residents, and prevents them from living anything but a dependent and restricted life (HRW 2007: 80). In these conditions, resettlement can be the only available solution, and one that can be successful and positive for refugees. For this reason, resettlement is the most *viable* solution for refugees in PRS, and Western countries should work to increase resettlement quotas. This does not, however, mean that this solution is the most *desirable* for the refugees concerned. The international community must not become lazy; resettlement is positive but should be accompanied by diplomatic pressure, conflict resolution and peacekeeping activities to facilitate eventual repatriation for those refugees who still desire to return.

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