

Planning of Rural Settlements

as

Durable Solutions for

Refugees

D. Drucker

UNHCR

Geneva, April 1987

## Tentative Table of Contents

### INTRODUCTION

- Refugee settlements planned within a wider development context
- Self-reliance includes integration into the interdependency structures of the host country
- Refugees as contributors (rather than a burden) to scarce resources
- Need for specific mechanisms for involving refugees/settlers in whole planning/implementation process
- The planning process needs to become more people-oriented if the technical expertise is to be more effectively utilised
- The requirement of building from hand-over milestones into the planning

### POLICY

- Policy agreement, clarification and implications - the foundation of planning

### PRE-RECONNAISSANCE STAGE

- Objectives
- Identification of sources and collection of basic data
- Identification of organisations, personnel involved in related development projects

Need for and role of a community-development worker

Pre-settlement activity

Settlement planning activity - and beyond

How to ... guides

RECONNAISSANCE STAGE

Objectives

The technical explorations and assessment of options

- Settler and technician: Planning relationships
- Reconnaissance mission assessment

PROJECT DESIGN STAGE

Objectives

Parameters

Options and limitations

Preferences

Natural resources (recommendations)

Reconciliation of preferences

Accord of detail of planning with policy

The settler's responsibilities

in a unified design

## Settlement Planning Handbook

### Prologue

"When an ideal is pursued by a whole community, as in some communal economy schemes, it may make a scheme feasible through the sacrifices the participants are prepared to accept; but when the vision is only in the mind of the initiator, as it has been with most complete settlement schemes, the effects are often a sequence of unrealistic estimates, uneconomic measures and personal commitments which comprise part of the risks of the project."

Settlement Schemes in Tropical Africa, page 260,  
Robert Chambers, RKP, 1969

D. Drucker  
UNHCR, Geneva  
April 1987

Such planning to date has to a great extent drawn on technical knowledge and professional experience related to the physical environment and the quantifying methods of economics to provide guidance on production potentials, optimum scale, costs and expected benefits. People and their environments are intrinsically interactive and indivisible, but as there is much less sound knowledge about people and their behaviour than there is about the processes of the physical world, understandably the latter has been given greater attention. However, it has become increasingly evident that even the seemingly best-conceived plans have fallen short of expectations because of the limitations of know-how and attention to the people or social, aspects.

This guide will go some way to bring into focus the directions that a people-oriented planning process might take and to outline an improved technical/social mix of expertise in arriving at rural settlement programmes and projects.

Whether the planning of rural settlements is approached from the technical or social perspective,

the objective is the establishment of viable communities.

Viability of a rural settlement must of necessity be based on the available natural resources. These resources must include water, soil, food crops, animals, forests, fuel and so forth. Viability will depend not only on initial availability but also on their maintenance, renewability and improvement. These are specialist matters, as is the impact of climate and possible and appropriate means and technologies of balanced exploitation which maximise production without degrading or upsetting the ecological balance. The specialists' recommendations and opinion must draw on local wisdom and must also consider such knowledge in the context of an extensive range of tested knowledge and professional experience.

In contributing to the planning of refugee/settler rural settlements the specialists have found themselves faced with a wide variety of terrain, unfamiliar micro-climates, uncommon practices and adaptations, and data which is usually scarce, not readily available and of uncertain reliability. These specialist planners are also under extraordinary pressure with regard to the time available to produce recommendations and influence decisions which will have far-reaching and long-term significance.



1. Rural settlements should be planned within the broader context of long-term development plans for the area which includes both refugee/settlers and the indigenous population. This may well mean the extension and modification of existing development plans or the stimulation of new ones;
2. The resources and skills concentrated on the refugee/settler settlements should be so planned as to encourage development in the surrounding area and steps must be taken actively to avoid the resentment of the indigenous populations or encroachment upon their means of livelihood and aspirations.

UNHCR's responsibilities are of course focused on the refugee/settlers although in practice some of its endeavours spill over and within limits should spill over into the adjacent populations. The benefits of strengthening the infrastructure and the delivery of some services cannot reasonably be divided up between refugee/settlers and others without torturous bureaucratic demarcation. UNHCR has the responsibility of establishing rural settlements by planning with, mobilising, contributing to and co-ordinating its inputs with organisations of government and non-government, and international agencies. By placing refugee/settler settlements firmly in the context of broader development planning and activities, this collaboration role is intensified. The earlier and the more skilfully UNHCR plans in the context of the longer-term development of the wider society, the more effective the shorter-term settlement plans and endeavours should become.

The refugee/settler must move from constituting a burden to becoming a valued contributor to the host country's development.

It is also important to know that if the wider and longer-term considerations are an agreed and integral part of the settlement planning from the start, UNHCR should be able to phase out and hand over its responsibilities to the appropriate host-country institution, administrative structures and specialist agencies sooner and in a more satisfactory way. It needs to be recognised, however, that there is no clear-cut switch from refugee to settler and if the aim is, as declared, to establish viable communities, then attention must be paid to what is involved in community.



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The plan will also need to devise ways to enrich, reconstruct or build community mechanisms appropriate to the needs of establishing, maintaining and developing the settlement in conjunction with the situation and developments in the surrounding society. It is in community building of this kind that the earlier-defined objective of self-sufficiency (which was frequently interpreted only in terms of food and produce) can be widened into:

the objective of community-based self-reliance.

Although this guide will outline the contribution of the social scientist in contributing his/her particular skills to those of the other specialists, the contribution should not be seen as just an addition to the planning process. The social scientist should have a role in the reshaping of the planning process itself.

There has been a growing insistence on the fact that communities, people, beneficiaries, should not be planned for but planned with, from defining objectives through all the phases of planning, monitoring and evaluation. The reasons for arguing this approval are applicable to refugee/settlers, but the means for realistically carrying out such exhortations in practise are as yet poorly developed. Nevertheless, finding ways is a matter of urgency, for the very process of involving the refugee/settlers is likely to go a long way towards creating communities which can equitably increase their control over resources, decision-making processes and regulative institutions of their own and of the larger society.

This guide will suggest some of the ways in which this community participation process can be integrated into the planning of rural settlements.

In summary this guide will reflect the recent changes in thinking and approach based on past experience:

## Rural Settlements as "durable solutions"

### AGREEMENT ON POLICY

In reaching a decision to explore the possibilities of UNHCR assisting a Government in establishing rural settlements it is first necessary to be sure that there is an understanding that UNHCR policy and the Government's policy and intentions are in accord.

Among the important issues for such understanding are the following:

1. The most desirable solution, that of return of the refugees to their country of origin, is for the foreseeable future not a realistic option. Therefore, the Rural Settlement option is to be planned as a long-term (if not permanent) solution to meet the prevailing situation.
2. The establishment of a Rural Settlement should be planned within the context of the Government's wider development plans and programmes. This implies:
  - the extension, modification or stimulation of new development plans which will include both the refugee/settlers and the adjacent indigenous population;
  - the active involvement of development agencies, donors, and national planning and financing organisations.
3. UNHCR's inputs must be understood to be available within an agreed time-frame, the implication being that Government will take over responsibility for the rural settlements as part of its development plan, and the take-over will be planned from the beginning step by step, as agreed implementation milestones for UNHCR phase-out.

### The Pre-Reconnaissance Stage

#### Objectives

- a) To identify potential resources of information and support.
- b) To collect basic and readily available information regarding:
  - the possible development aspects of proposed sites,
  - the politico-administrative aspects of proposed sites,
  - the socio-economic aspects of proposed sites,
  - the refugee potential settler aspects of proposed sites.
- c) To provide a brief formal report encompassing the above and request a technical reconnaissance for likely sites.

#### Sources of Information

UNHCR representatives should find the following sources useful in obtaining information relevant to proposed rural settlements:

Technical Ministries  
UN Technical Agencies  
Geographical Institutes (General Survey Offices)  
University Departments  
Water Authorities  
Private Enterprises  
NGOs

The UNHCR representative should:

1. list all sources that prove useful (or might do so): Names, Addresses, Telephone. The appropriate contact persons should be alerted to the possibility that technical personnel might wish to make appointments during the Technical Reconnaissance Missions.



10. state how such services are ordinarily financed (revenues, contributions, payment for service, etc.):

- if revenues/taxes, will settlers pay? enjoy a period of tax exemption? for how long?
- if publicly-financed, will Government allocate staff and resources for ongoing provision of services?
- can there be provision for recruiting/training settlers for such national services?\*

Make a visit to the sites

- UNHCR representatives must be careful not to raise false expectations, and avoid commitment to any particular site or activity. They should meet with local officials and community leaders to reduce rumours but get some feel of the likely response to settlers if such a decision is made regarding a particular location.
  - The UNHCR representative should arrange to be accompanied by his Government counterpart; anyone particularly familiar with the area; any technical ministry or international agency concerned with developments in the area; a carefully chosen member of the refugee/settler committee or planning group (whose role and responsibilities, should be well understood ahead of time).
1. Describe all means of access to the sites, seasonally, and the distances (and travel time) to significant adjacent locations.
  2. Describe local transport type, condition, any maintenance facilities.
  3. Explore why the sites have not been previously settled by nationals (a guide to problems?).

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\* See footnote page 2.



- the average local costs for available materials, items, labour, services:
  - eg. roads per kilometre
  - building materials
  - necessary tools, machinery, etc.
- produce and consumer goods in local markets (time of year, costs).
- economic activities.
- local licensing requirements
- Give an impression of local standards of living and well-being
- Give some assessment of people's attitudes to the possibility of development and settlers, and how the local people might be affected (positively/negatively)
- What can be learned of the local security situation

The extent and validity of this information can be expected to contribute greatly to the work of specialists. It will certainly save a lot of specialist time, which is both scarce and expensive. It should also provide the local UNHCR personnel with valuable experience and understanding for future activities, whether settlement is decided or not.

#### Refugees and Participation (Pre-requisites)

There is an emerging realisation that successful settlement has been impeded or made impossible by the neglect of the social aspects of planning. Emphasis must now be given to genuine refugee/settler participation in the decision-making process, because if the refugees are not ready, willing, or able to become settlers, the best physical, logistical and economic plans are futile.

The refugees must experience the structure of the leadership as being their leadership, not an imposed one:

- traditional chiefs?
- block leaders?
- elected leaders?
- etc.

3. The refugees must be kept fully informed about:

- what has happened
- what is happening
- what is being explored or thought about
- what is being planned
- what decisions will need to be made

3(a) \*A range of methods for genuine two-way information exchanging must be set up.

- What are the refugees' opinions?
- What are the refugees' questions?
- What are the refugees' objections?
- What are the refugees' suggestions?
- What are the refugees' preferences?
- What are the refugees' priorities?

Possible Methods:

General meetings:-

- Meetings of leaders
- Meetings of block leaders
- Meetings of special interest groups

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\* Many activities involved here to keep refugees constructively busy. Some argue that such a process opens up a whole range of problems. However, it is better to handle these early and be aware of these problems if future projects are not to be put at risk.

An example of How to ... guides might be placed in the Annexes.

- Identify who is locally available to assist the refugees/settlers in collecting and presenting information?  
or
- What national resources might be available to assist in these ways?
- 'How to ... guides' should be prepared for the settlement group(s) for each activity.

For example: Data collection

- Demography
  - Male/female
  - Ages (young/old/able-bodied)
  - Dependants, infirm, handicapped, etc.
  - Married/single
  - Family size/structure
  - etc,
- Identification of those:
  - actively interested
  - probably interested
  - might be interested
  - not very interested
  - not at all interested
  - opposed to
  - rural settlement

Registration of applicants for rural settlement

- Involvement in such issues as:
  - What are the criteria on which selection for settlement is to be made?
  - Who will decide who is eligible for settlement?

### Settlers' Familiar Diet

Range of usual items  
Seasonal changes  
Household food storage/water storage  
Cooking methods (a refugee/settler cookbook?)  
Fuels  
Utensils  
Taboos

### Settlers' Familiar Housing/Dwellings

- Building materials
- Methods of construction
- Internal layout
- External layout
- Relationship to other dwellings
- Life span of dwellings/repairs, etc.
- Communal dwellings/facilities

### Settlers' Familiar Land Holding Rights

- Ownership
- Inheritance
- Tenure
- Pasture/water rights
- Share-cropping
- Taxation (?)

### Settlers' Familiar Communal Activities

- Co-operatives - purchasing
  - selling
  - equipment-sharing
- Community labour practices
- Dwelling construction
- Sowing/harvesting



Where and in whose administrative structure (Government, UNHCR, other) the community development worker should be located will depend on the specific situation. However, although much of his/her time should be spent at the field level, the post should be seen as a critical one in the team of planners and implementors of programme.

Community development worker job process

(Irrespective of the question of durable solutions)

- a) Arranging for a friendly reception of all refugees.
- b) Explaining the resources and facilities available to the refugees.
- c) Initially identifying leaders among the refugees,
  - actively enlisting these leaders:
    - in the receiving of the refugees,
    - explaining the resources and facilities.
- d) Assisting in the setting up of a satisfactory leadership structure properly representing the overall refugee population.
- e) Establishing methods for two-way information gathering and sharing between refugees, relevant personnel and the adjacent communities.
- f) Identifying tasks and providing support for the leadership or its sub-groups in playing an active part in the issues which affect the refugee community.

Community work for durable solution - settlement

1. Briefing the refugees regarding the progress being made in achieving durable solutions.
2. Explaining the situation when the government and UNHCR open discussion of the possibility of exploring the settlement option.

## The reconnaissance stage

### Objectives

- To assemble and review existing data and studies.
- To make exploratory field studies.
- To decide on what in-depth studies are necessary.
- To make a preliminary assessment of the settlement options and implications and provide a set of recommendations.

The reconnaissance activities are conducted by a team of specialists which might include:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- Possible implementation partners.  
(See sample terms of reference Annex.)

The reconnaissance mission will assemble data in a systematic and interrelated manner covering a wide range of subject matter.

The subject areas will include:

### Soil investigations

Composition, quality, fertility, topography, erosion, drainage, means of maintaining ecological balance, etc.

### Infra-structure

Establishment of boundaries.

Access: roads, seasonal influences, transportation.

Economic activities: agricultural, other, markets.

### Administrative structures, services

Agricultural extension, veterinary, schools, hospitals,  
dispensaries (levels of service), local leadership patterns.

Dwellings, communal facilities, lay-out, building materials and  
methods.

### Implementing options

Identification of possible agencies and an assessment of their  
organisational capacity.

### Reconnaissance missions assessment

A preliminary assessment is made regarding the proposed site's viability:  
Viability must be judged in terms of self-sufficiency in food;  
economically able to obtain basic necessities and to contribute to and  
become integrated into the surrounding development activities.

The assessment must:

- estimate the carrying capacity of a given site (number of settlers at the establishment of the settlement and the expected population growth rate);
- outline the necessary and possible investments in establishing, maintaining and on-going development of settlement sites;
- suggest the budget requirements, staffing patterns and time frame within which implementation and hand-over can be expected.

The content of these discussions and the expected feedback should become the focus of on-going briefings and meetings with the settlers, the community development worker, and the planning organisation.

### Project Design Stage

#### Objective

- To outline the main elements and their inter-relationships in a comprehensive plan for the establishment and consolidation of a viable rural settlement within the context of the host country's wider development programme.
- The collected data related to the available physical resources will determine the overall parameters of what might be possible.
- The technical specialists will make their judgements and spell out the range and limitations of the options and provide an analysis of the implications technical, economic and social related to each option in order to enhance the making of choices.
- The making of choices although much influenced by the physical conditions and technical recommendations, never-the-less is finally decided by preferences.\*

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\* This situation suggests that a great deal of planning will have to emerge and continue throughout the implementation stage. This means that the familiar 'blueprint' style of classical planning will need to be greatly modified in refugee/settlement project design and planning. Mechanisms must be provided for quick identification of problems, swift responses and where necessary modification of the original plans. See: Lance Clark, who argues that what takes place during implementation of plans is of more significance than the plan itself, and David L. Korten, "Community Organisation and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach", Public Administration Review?



2. The refugee population must be shown to play a prominent role in the whole process of decision making in settlement planning and implementation.\*\*

The implications for planning and project design are far-reaching.

Emphasized earlier. Repeat here?

- i) Advantageously (for the emergency and care and maintenance period) preceeding, but certainly at, the point of deciding on a rural settlement option, plans must be made and implemented to ensure that there are effective mechanisms for the refugee population to play its part in the planning process.
- ii) The refugees become instrumental in collecting and presenting data. The data is of a kind which relates "who we are" and "what we can and might be able to do". This socio-economic data has been poorly taken into account to date, but must be highly influential in making choices at the time of project design and work plans.

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\*\* This policy element has emerged from both value concepts of 'social justice' and pragmatically from the findings that not involving the so-called 'beneficiaries' has contributed to a high degree of failure.

The dimensions of the project design will require answers to the following major questions:

- The economic basis of the settlement and balance exploitation of natural resources
- The optimum size allowing for population growth and change
- The technology to be employed which is appropriate, cost-effective and maintainable
- The range and level of services to be established
- The organisational/participatory nature of the settlement
- The process of moving from initial dependency to self-reliance and integration into the structure of the host country
- Given the nature of the natural resources, what kind of agriculture, or mix, is to be planned (eg. rainfed, irrigation\*, etc.).
- What crops will meet subsistence needs and what crops provide cash (necessary for consumer items, capital and maintenance costs, infrastructure, services, etc.).
- What plans can be made for livestock, horticulture, forestry, fisheries, etc.

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\*Note: A study of previous settlements concludes that "few, if any, settlements based on irrigation are likely to meet their operating costs and maintenance costs without continuous outside assistance". Lance Clark - Barry Stein, Older Refugee Settlements in Africa, R.P.G., Feb. 1987. This suggests that such decisions must be made with extreme caution or with much more detailed attention than hitherto.

- How will land holding rights be established and how dealt with in relation to transfer of rights - loss of, newcomers to, natural growth of, population.

Continued list, please.

Roads, Transport, Agro-industry, Crafts, Services, Health, Schools, Fuel, Communications (radio, telephone), Security, Protection of vulnerable groups, etc., etc.

#### Work plans stage

##### Objective

To detail the whole range of activities to be performed.\*

To detail the time frame and sequence of activities, showing advance parties, preparation, transfer of refugees to settler sites.

To identify the manpower required and the responsibility for carrying out the tasks.

To detail where and when, what resources will be made available in order to carry out the tasks.

To detail the communication/reporting system(s) to ensure monitoring of activity and prompt identification of problems in order to resolve the problems or modify the work plans.

To identify the role and responsibilities of the implementing agencies and to indicate the complimentary roles of the settlers in the implementation process.

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\* For a method of establishing community-based work plans, see D. Drucker. Ask a silly question, get a silly answer. Bangkok, 1981.



## AN AID TO PLANNING WITH THE COMMUNITY

At a large gathering everyone is invited to list all the things that they foresee will need to be done. The emphasis is on activities. Bearing in mind the low level of literacy, someone is invited to do a drawing of each activity (no great artistic skill is necessary; matchstick men and crude representations will do, although it is surprising how often a village artist is discovered). Each drawing is pinned on the wall until all the actions have been mentioned and everything seems to have been covered. The activities are then considered in order of precedence chronologically, clustering the pictures where activities have to be undertaken simultaneously. When the sequence has been pinned around the meeting place to everyone's satisfaction, consideration can be given to practicalities such as seasons, wet/dry, sowing/harvest, festivals and so on, so that above the pictures agreed dates for the activity can be placed. (Without talking the language of planning the community will have produced their own flow charts and chronological bar chart representations!) How many people, what skills, tools and resources, can be represented under each of the drawings and at some point who exactly will be involved in each activity can be worked out and added - a manpower plan!

A useful device can be utilised to deal with costs and book-keeping,\* which will clarify matters even for those poorly endowed with numeracy: plastic bags should be placed under each activity and play money (as in the game of Monopoly) used to count what each activity is expected to cost.\* Where there is to be some revenue, from selling water or some other produce, a similar estimating and counting out can be enacted and shown against costs. Later, as money is collected or dispersed, it can be shown to be moved from one plastic bag to another. There now exists a very visible representation of the community budgeting for the project, and the whole collection of pictures and bags remains in the community publicly displayed and can be used for monitoring and further discussions as the project gets under way and proceeds.

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\* Poor attention to such matters has been the curse of development efforts



VERNMENT

FUGEES

E M E R G E N C Y  
C A R E  
M A I N T E N A N C E

Agree Policy  
SETTLEMENT OPTION  
i. Long term  
ii. Dev. context  
iii. Phase out time frame  
iv. Refugee organisation/  
participation  
v. Voluntary settlement  
vi. Formal integration/  
rights  
Agree Policy

REFUGEES  
CONSTITUTE  
SETTLEMENT  
PLANNING  
GROUPS

DISCUSSIONS

TA

Numbers  
Demography  
Skills/  
qualifications  
Health status  
Leadership  
characteristics

Identification  
of those  
interested  
Registration  
- criteria  
- selection  
Detail settlers  
skills  
Familiarities  
- agriculture  
- diets  
- dwellings  
- land rights  
- communal  
activity  
- technology  
- health  
Tech. resources  
Dev. activities  
Site choices  
Reasons for choice  
Boundaries  
Maps, surveys  
Land holding  
services  
- levels  
- financing  
Tax (exempting)  
Site visits  
Accompany by  
Meet with  
Access  
Transport  
Local maps, surveys  
Dwellings  
- present usage  
- present claims  
Why not settled  
previously  
Visual (camera)  
Topography  
Vegetation  
Climate  
Agriculture  
Water  
Pests  
Contractor costs  
Living standards  
Attitudes  
Security

REPORT

HCR

R E G I S T R A T I O N  
E X P L A I N  
E N H A N C E  
C A P A B I L I T Y  
U N H C R  
L E A D E R S H I P  
R O L E

EXPLAIN  
SETTLEMENT  
OPTION

CLARIFY  
ROLES AND  
RESPON-  
SIBILITIES

PROVIDE  
PLANNING  
SUPPORT

PRE-  
RECONNAISSANCE

PRE-  
RECONNAISSAN