

CHAPTER III

REFUGEE DECISION MAKING AND REPATRIATION

The beginning of a refugee migration is characterized by confusion and haste. In many cases, there is a lack of clear information about the unrest or conflict and their possible effect on civilian populations. Because of this lack of information, potential refugees are forced to react to rapidly changing events and situations. All that many refugees perceive is that they are unsafe and that the remedy to this situation is to leave their home area quickly. On the other hand, refugees tend to have much more control over the timing and context of their return home (Koser 1993, p. 174). In a spontaneous voluntary repatriation, refugees have the opportunity to make their own decisions regarding when and how they will return home. Even if they decide to return home during a more strictly controlled official repatriation exercise, the refugees can still exercise some control over certain aspects of their return migration, such as the timing of their return and their destination in home areas.

The decision to repatriate is a complex procedure for refugees and involves the comparison of the perception of the attraction of returning home, with several other options, including remaining in exile as refugees (Gorman 1984b, p. 439). The repatriation decision-making process requires refugees to make some type of cost-benefit analysis, based on the information available to them, as to whether continued exile is a better option than returning home. The decision must involve a large number of factors, from both the home area and the settlement area. These factors include: security, availability of work or land, food and fuel supply, availability of health care and other social services. When the medium-term benefits of repatriation outweigh

those of remaining as refugees, then return migration is likely to occur. Cuny and Stein (1992, p. 20) note that "...when refugees make a decision to return, they are making a move to re-empower themselves." The decision to return home marks the beginning of the end of the refugee cycle. Once home, the refugees can begin the equally complex task of rebuilding their lives. What follows is a discussion of how refugees receive information in order to make a decision about repatriation. Following this, a model describing the information and decision-making process is presented.

REFUGEE INFORMATION NETWORKS

No matter how isolated refugees might appear, as they continue their lives in organized settlements, or as spontaneously settled refugees, they are always on the lookout for news about their home areas. Indeed Makanya (1991, p. 25) notes that in Zimbabwean refugee camps in Zambia and elsewhere, the refugees' lives revolved around the reception and redistribution of news about conditions at home. Most refugees spent at least some part of their day seeking information about home. In most refugee situations, two types of information and information networks exist: official and unofficial. Official sources for refugee information include governments, NGOs, liberation and political fronts, as well as the media in all its forms. Less easy to identify are the multitude of unofficial or informal sources that refugees use to receive and pass on information about their homelands. The influence of these unofficial sources of information on the decision making process and repatriation cannot be underestimated. Many case-studies of African refugee repatriation emphasize these as the single most important source for repatriation information, because refugees feel that they can trust them. (Bouhouche 1991, p. 5; Makanya 1991, p. 25; Hendrie 1991, p. 204).

Informal Information Sources

As soon as refugees become settled in exile, there generally begins a process of determining when repatriation could be possible. It is the refugees themselves, not governments, NGOs or the UN, who become the principal actors in this process. Despite the fact that there may have been extreme disruption during and immediately following the flight from their homeland, refugees, their families and communities soon develop sophisticated social networks in their settlement areas. Using these social networks, the refugees actively seek out information sources that they consider reliable in order to learn about what is happening back home (Nunes and Wilson 1991, p. 13).

Informal Network

While whole villages or communities often flee as a group during a refugee migration, frequently some members of the community are unable or unwilling to flee. These stay-at-home community members become essential to the repatriation decision-making process by passing on to the refugees news about conditions at home. Refugees who settle in close proximity to the border of their homelands tend to receive the most accurate information (Rogge 1991, p. 26). The further the information travels from the home area to the refugees, the more likely that it will become distorted along the way. Most refugees however, do not rely on a single source of information and are able to filter out any exaggerated or misleading information.

A survey of Chadian refugees in the Sudan provides an important example of the sources of refugee information. Of the refugees surveyed in camps, twenty-three per-cent had a direct relative still living in Chad (Ruiz 1987, p 23). Communication regarding the security and economic situation in the country was frequently relayed to the refugees by several means. Refugees with contacts at home received letters or messages from across the border. Inside the camps, information was further disseminated to other refugees, who might not have had a contact in Chad. Because of

the close-knit community in the refugee camps, those refugees who had no close family living in Chad were able to receive the news from home.

While some refugees receive detailed information about home areas through the informal information network, others can sometimes be left out of the decision-making process, due to a lack of continuous updates about the home situation. Women refugees in particular often receive less information than their male counterparts. While each case is different, the transitional nature of refugee communities provides difficulties for some women (Brazeau 1992, p. 2). For example, an informal refugee information network might develop along traditional ethnic lines, with men being the primary sources and transmitters of information. Frequently there are many female-headed households in refugee camps or communities. In a male-dominated society these female-headed households can be left out of the information loop (Martin 1995, p. 46). Decision-making by female-headed households regarding if and when to return home may be adversely affected.

Early Returnees

An essential part of any refugee information system are the early returnees who report back to the refugee in exile about conditions at home. The information returned by these early repatriates is often considered by the refugees to be the most reliable of all possible information sources (Hogan 1992, p. 423). Because they have been refugees themselves, early returnees understand what kind of information is most valued by those still in exile.

Soon after going into exile, some refugee communities, especially those settled close to frontiers, develop a system of temporary return migration. This is done both to keep up to date with home conditions and to maintain farms in their former home areas. During the mid-1980s, Tigrayan refugees in Sudan would wait for breaks in the conflict and when possible, return home to plant crops during the rainy season. They would then

cross back into Sudan and rejoin their refugee community while their crops grew and matured. Only at harvest time, if local security conditions allowed it, would the refugees (mostly men) return for the harvest (Hendrie 1991, p. 204). During their time in Ethiopia, the refugees would continually seek information about the security situation on both a regional level, as well as conditions particular to their own homelands. This first-hand, up-to-date knowledge of their home areas helped precipitate a large-scale repatriation in 1986.

In the case of Ugandan refugees in Sudan, a pattern of incremental repatriation emerged, returning certain family members only when it was considered totally safe. Initial returnees were heads of households with perhaps one son, who returned with a few head of cattle, or to clear a small plot of land (Kabera and Muyanja 1991, p. 18). Once it was considered safe, these first returnees were followed by children who were able to help in the sowing of crops, leaving behind those who were handicapped, or had some economic tie such as a job in Sudan. These refugees were the last to return home. Such refugees were making a deliberate decision to take as few risks as possible during repatriation. Many of the refugees had seen subsequent new Ugandan governments, with their promises of security come and go. They remained unwilling to commit their entire families to a single-step repatriation. Throughout the repatriation process, information on security, food supply and other essentials was passed back to the remaining refugee communities in order to help them assess the viability of a full-scale return.

Surveys of the attitude of Chadian refugees to their possible repatriation indicated that twenty-eight percent of refugee families had returned at least one member back to Chad in order to assess the situation there (Ruiz 1987, p. 23). Despite several amnesties, combined with repeated assurances of safety from the Chadian government, most refugees relied on the information that they received informally and refused to

return until the security situation had improved markedly (Alhabo and Passang 1991, p. 5).

While early returnees might be the source of considerable useful information for other refugees considering repatriation, the information that they provide is itself subject to some inaccuracy. Refugees who repatriate as soon as the possibility presents itself tend to be those who were least adjusted during their exile (Akol 1991, p. 25). Upon their return, these repatriates are more likely to provide an exaggerated account of their positive experiences, despite the fact that conditions in the home areas might be unsuitable for large-scale repatriation. Refugees who are maladjusted during their exile are more likely to take risks by repatriating into areas that are not entirely secure, and do not pass on information about security problems when communicating with other refugees.

Official Information Sources

During their exile, refugees receive information about conditions at home from a diverse group of official sources. These official sources, depending on their disposition to the refugees, can provide a wealth of information to the displacees, some of which may be conflicting. Governments, both from the host country and the home country, NGOs, political fronts and the media are all important sources of information during the repatriation decision-making process. Refugees, when faced with information from official sources, must decide first whether or not they trust the source of the information, before they believe the information itself. Refugees who have been betrayed in the past by a government or a liberation front are more likely to be skeptical of the information provided by these sources.

Information From Governments

The distrust of governments is almost a universal dimension of a refugee migration. Many migrations are initiated by government action or indirectly by government inaction. On the side of the host nation, promises may be made to the refugees that are not kept, or governments may be openly hostile to refugees. Whenever official statements are made about conditions at home, refugees must make a determination of the motivation for these statements. While this is not always the case, governments on both sides are often eager to see an end to refugee situations. Host governments consider the refugees a burden, while home governments consider them an embarrassment. Efforts by governments to encourage repatriation often include the dissemination of information that is suspect.

When home governments directly control some or all the media, this can be used to attract refugees home. The long and drawn-out exile of Chadians in the mid-1980s was exacerbated by the fact that from the outset, the official government media sources spread the official word that the country was safe for returning refugees. The refugees, from their unofficial sources, knew this to be untrue (Alhabet and Passang 1991, p. 4). Refugees continued to flee Chad while at the same time the government boasted of the improving security situation. Later, when the security situation had genuinely stabilized and refugees were looking for useful information about the possibility of repatriation, the government's official sources suffered greatly from a lack of credibility. In this case, informal sources of information were used almost exclusively in the repatriation decision-making process.

While refugees can remain skeptical of authorized government media reports, they do not generally ignore these altogether. Official information sources, though biased, can provide important information to the skilled interpreter. Ugandan refugees in Sudan distrusted the official news sources, but were familiar enough with their style and content to read between the lines (Kabera and Muyanja 1991, p. 18). Combining

what they knew from their informal networks with official sources, the refugees were able to understand in considerable detail the progress of the civil war in their homeland.

Ethiopian refugees in Djibouti were subjected to a double-sided media campaign designed to impel their repatriation. Government of Ethiopia news sources frequently misrepresented the security situation in the country (Crisp 1984b, p. 79). While visits to the possible repatriation areas for the refugees were arranged in order to assess local conditions, only the positive comments of refugees were repeated in the official press. Djibouti, the host country, used the media to spread rumours of an imminent forced repatriation program in order to frighten the refugees into returning on their own. In most cases, this type of manipulation of the media is recognized by the refugees for the sham that it is. Rather than creating an atmosphere for a safe voluntary repatriation, these maneuvers to coerce repatriation tend to backfire on governments. Refugees, with their informal knowledge of home conditions, recognize attempts to force a return and frequently become more entrenched as refugees and less willing to return home (Cuny 1990a, p. 3).

Information From Non-Governmental Organizations

More and more, aid and relief agencies as well as UNHCR are trying to fill the gap left by governments by providing refugees with information regarding possible repatriation. Crisp (1984c, p. 5) recommends that independent humanitarian organizations should take the lead in providing good information to refugees. When repatriation seems to be a likely possibility, fact finding missions, with freely chosen refugee members should investigate conditions at home. Recognizing the inexperience of some NGOs and their employees, Rogge (1991, p. 27) warns that refugees can be misled by incorrect interpretations of information. Because NGOs tend to focus on large scale security concerns, rather than security on a local scale, refugees need to use caution when acting on their advice (Cuny and Stein 1992, p. 32). In addition, some

NGOs may have a vested interest in seeing the completion of a repatriation program, which could lead to the release of compromised information. In order to avoid these pitfalls, the active participation of refugees in obtaining better information, rather than the direct provision of that information, should be the goal of NGOs.

Because of the high number of female headed households in many refugee populations, UNHCR has initiated programs in Cambodia and Mexico to ensure that women refugees gain access to the information that they need in order to make realistic decisions about repatriation (Brazeau 1992, p. 3). Among the best of these projects are those which allow selected women refugees to participate in tours of their home areas before making final decisions about repatriation. Because many African woman refugees do not receive sufficient information (Martin 1992, p. 3), ideally this type of program should be replicated on the African continent.

Indigenous NGOs and churches often provide some of the most useful and accurate information to refugees. Many of these organizations may still be operating in the areas the refugees have fled, and will therefore have the most reliable information. In addition, because the sources are familiar to the refugees, they are more likely to trust these locally controlled agencies. During their exile from Rhodesia, many refugees noted the importance of church-based agencies in keeping them up to date with happenings at home (Jackson 1991, p. 33). These churches and church-based NGOs were often at the forefront of the liberation struggle, but remained one of the few sources not routinely censored by the government.

Conflicts sometimes arise between governments, NGOs, UNHCR and refugees during the implementation of official repatriation exercises. While Tripartite agreements between two governments and UNHCR may have been signed, and arrangements made with local NGOs to implement a repatriation program, refugees may decide that the security situation in their home areas is still unstable. International agencies and governments tend to focus on broad security issues throughout a region or

nation. Refugees, on the other hand, are much more interested in micro-scale information, regarding what is happening in their own villages (Cuny and Stein 1992, p. 33). Consequently those who receive conflicting information regarding security issues from official and unofficial sources are much more likely to maintain a 'wait and see' attitude towards repatriation.

LOCAL CONDITIONS

The second component involved in making an informed decision about repatriation, is the state of affairs where the refugees are settled. Most repatriation decisions are a balance between what the refugees know about their present situation and what they perceive their situation would be if they returned home. As is the case in all repatriations, the balance between the two is based upon the context of the original refugee migration. In the past, when refugees were returning home following a liberation struggle, local conditions had a less significant role in the decision-making process. The intention of such refugees was to remain in exile until liberation occurred and to return home soon after. In more contemporary refugee situations, those fleeing internal conflicts tend to make a more cautious approach in deciding when to return. Their decision making is much more affected by their lifestyles as refugees and what potential benefits continued exile have over returning home.

Local Conditions and Unassisted Refugees

Many unassisted refugee repatriations occur without the active intervention of governments or NGOs. Refugees who are for the most part self-sufficient, frequently return home without assistance. Also, refugees who are well adapted economically and socially to their exile, as well as those living close to their home areas, are the most likely to return without the benefit of assistance. Alternately those who live in camps or organized settlements are more likely to accept assistance during repatriation. For both

of these groups, the conditions in the settlement area have a direct bearing on the decision making process.

Self-supporting refugees are more likely to be active participants in the economy of the settlement area. These refugees rely to a certain extent on their ability to interact with the local community. If opportunities are reduced, either through direct government policy or by other means, then the refugees long term situation can become more tenuous. Where refugees are settled in close proximity to each other, environmental stress may become an important factor in their community's long-term viability. While such necessities as firewood and water might be in good supply at the initial stages of their settlement, these resources are depleted over time, forcing refugees to search further afield, or to use some of their limited incomes to buy such goods.

Agricultural cycles are an extremely important factor in determining when refugees will repatriate. Refugees are unlikely to abandon a crop that is nearly ready for harvest. In addition, they are most likely to return home in advance of planting season in their home areas, in order to get a good start on the next year's food supply. This type of staged return was undertaken by Tigrayan refugees from 1985 to 1987. Refugees fled Ethiopia to Sudan when a large scale famine appeared imminent in 1985. When there was sufficient water to grow crops in Ethiopia, but not enough to support the entire population, some refugees returned in stages, to plant and harvest crops (Hendrie 1995, p. 109).

Local Conditions and Assisted Refugees

Refugees who rely on assistance for all or a portion of their daily needs are more vulnerable to the whims of governments and international agencies. If at any point a government wishes to be rid of some of its refugee burden, denying certain services to refugees can be one of the first steps. For example, refugees who receive food aid as a

major component in their diets are extremely vulnerable to this type of coercion. If rations are reduced or eliminated and the refugees have no access to local sources of food, then other options, including returning home have to be considered. In Djibouti during the mid 1980s, refugees who were completely reliant on food aid were denied this aid as a part of a strategy to force them to leave the country (Crisp 1984b, p. 76). Because of their knowledge of the unstable conditions at home, most refugees still refused to repatriate and survived on what little they were able to purchase locally.

In some cases, UNHCR and local governments have been involved in the controversial step of reducing rations or services in order to promote repatriation . If this strategy is used when only a few early repatriates have made the journey home, then the question arises as to the voluntariness of the refugees' decision to return. Officials from the UN and NGOs must take care to ensure that the reduction of services is not used as a device simply to force repatriation contrary to the will of the refugees (Huffman 1992, p. 121). Refugees who repatriate because of reduced inputs from UNHCR or NGOs and find that their situation on returning is not tenable, can sometimes turn around and return to the country of asylum, despite the fact that services would now be denied to them. To the refugees, basic survival, even in exile remains a superior option to continued instability and violence at home. In the future, when the situation at home does improve, these refugees are less likely to quickly return home. Refugees in Djibouti in 1986 were informed that they had no choice but to return home with some assistance from UNHCR. Those who refused to participate in the repatriation would have their refugee status discontinued and their rations stopped (Goodwin-Gill 1989, p. 278). Because Djibouti has almost no arable land, the refugees were almost completely dependent on food aid. Combined with a misinformation program, the possibility of a reduction in rations caused significant unrest in the refugee community.

Pressures from international donors can be a catalyst for the reduction of refugees' rations in order to promote repatriation. Financing a single repatriation, while expensive to donors, is perceived to be cheaper than maintaining refugees in camps for an extended and unknown period of time (Harrell-Bond 1989, p. 44). Hence, refugees can sometimes become pawns in a larger game of international aid policy. The UNHCR, fearful of losing donors, can become involved in programs that promote repatriation in advance of the refugees' genuine desire to return. An example of donor pressure being used to accelerate repatriation is that of Somali refugees in Ethiopia in 1994. The Government of the United States, UNHCR's main donor, threatened to pull out of financing refugee camps for the Somalis. The UNHCR reduced refugee rations based on the American pressure and on the mistaken assumption that large-scale spontaneous repatriation was underway (Waldron and Hasci 1995, p. 66). In cases such as this, UNHCR must take care to balance the requirements of its powerful donors with the equally important needs of the much less powerful refugees.

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

It is important to note that in any refugee situation, not all refugees necessarily think alike. Differential decision making is possible based on differences between individual refugees (Stein and Cuny 1992b, p. 12). While it is common to refer to 'refugee populations' or 'refugee masses', these populations are made up of individuals, all of whom have their own diverse perceptions of their situations. Generalizations made about an entire 'refugee population' should take into account the possibility of differences between individuals. In addition, the original context that caused the refugees to flee also affects the eventual repatriation decision-making process. In the past, refugees fleeing from anti-colonial warfare had an easier decision to make than more contemporary refugees who flee a variety of different types of conflicts.

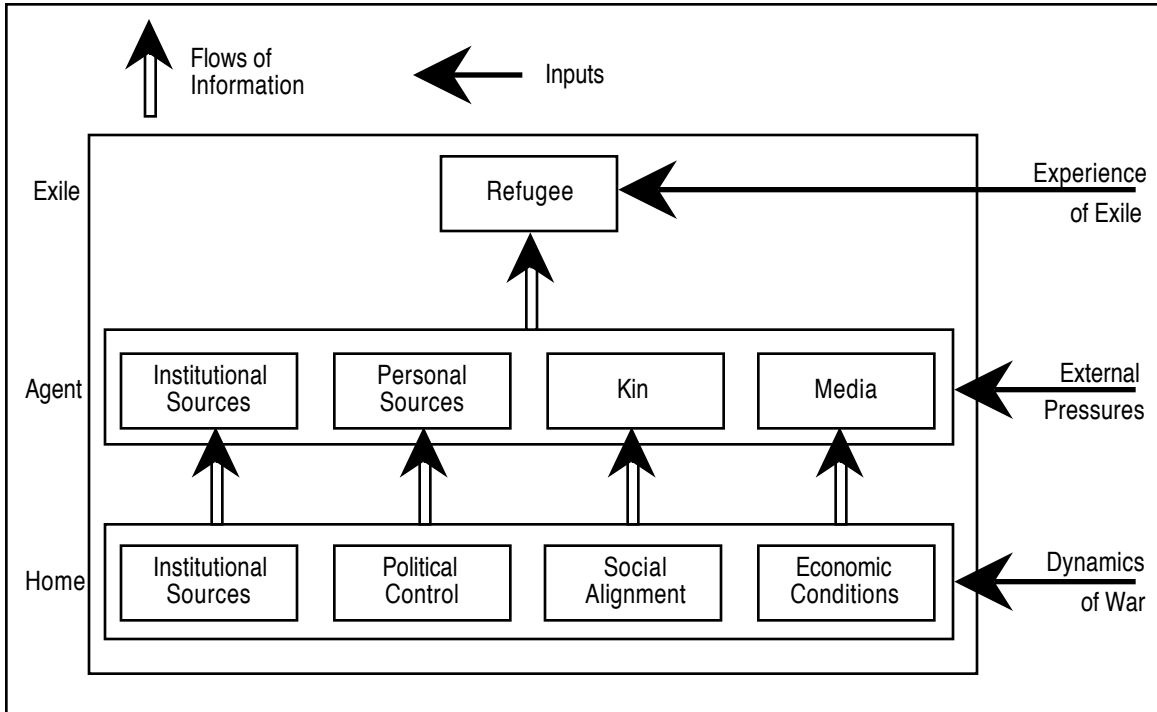
As noted previously, repatriation is the beginning of a process by which refugees move to re-empower themselves. While refugees exert some control over their lives during exile, much of what they do is out of the necessity of daily survival. The process that begins at the decision-making point is the first in a series of steps that allows refugees to regain control over the course of their lives.

Koser's Model of Repatriation Decision-Making

In his discussion of refugee decision making, Koser (1993, p. 176) suggests a model for a refugee information system and its relation to the repatriation process. A diagram of the model is included as Figure 3.1. The model includes 'inputs' that initially affect the 'home' area, and 'agents' that transmit information to refugees in exile. The refugees further perceive their 'experience of exile', which would include local conditions during exile. Refugee decision making is a process that requires the refugees to compare the flows of information they receive from the home area with their experience in exile. When the benefits of returning home outweigh those of remaining as refugees, repatriation takes place.

This model implicitly simplifies and makes assumptions about the information and decision-making process. Among the assumptions are: refugees passively receive information; they receive information as individuals; and repatriation is the desire of all refugees. Koser admits that the assumption that refugees do not actively seek information is probably unrealistic. Certainly there are many instances from the literature where refugees do actively seek information about home areas (Cuny and Stein 1991a, p. 27; Hendrie 1991, p. 204). In addition, the model ignores the fact that some refugees make scouting trips, or send family members to home areas in order to assess the conditions directly in advance of repatriation. While this model does have some implied weaknesses, it can be useful to demonstrate whether information flows and local conditions affect how refugees decide to return home.

Figure 3.1 Model of a Refugee Information System

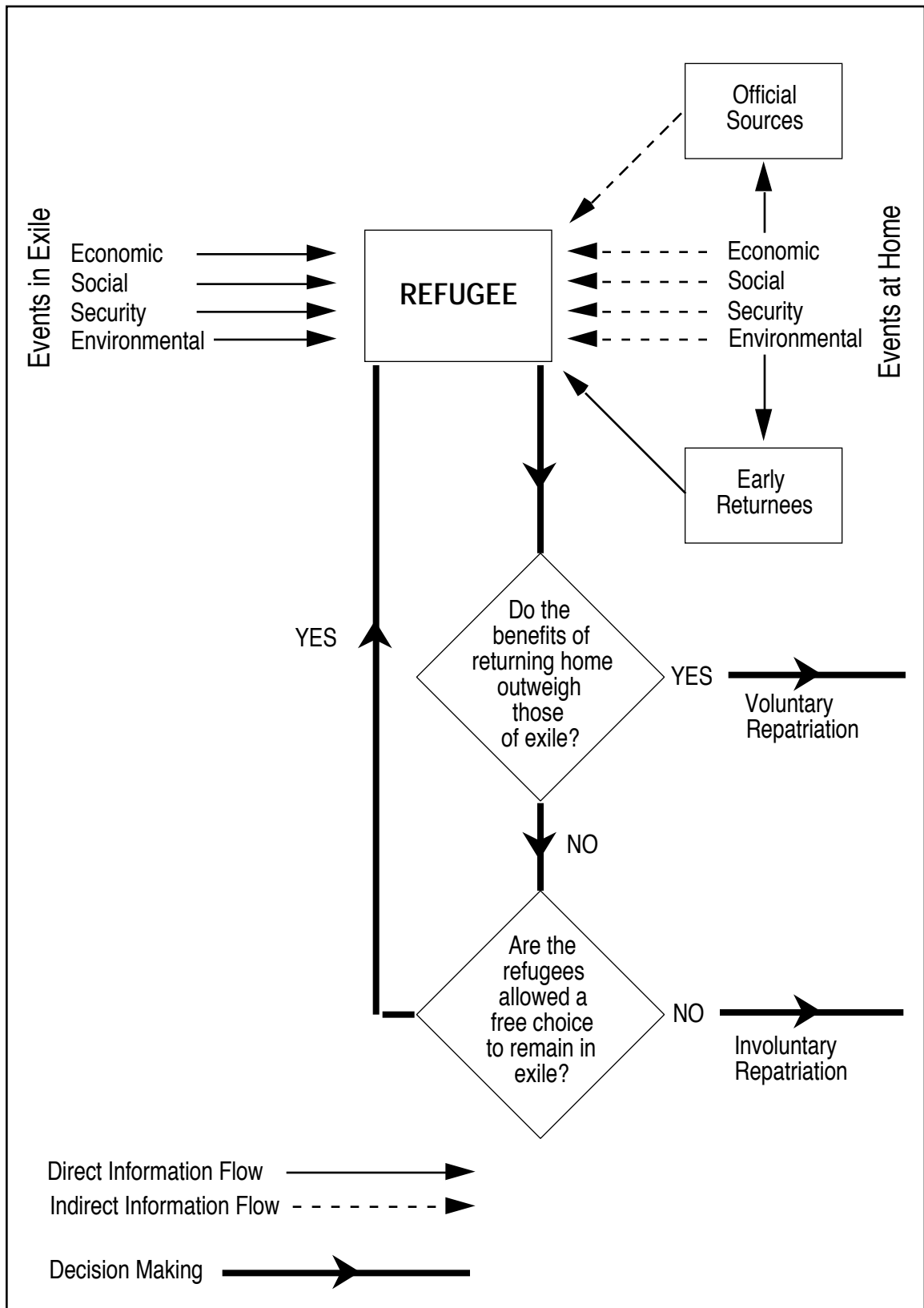


Source: Koser 1993, p. 176

An Expanded Model

The previous model describes how information flows affect the repatriation decision-making process. The model however, discounts the fact that some refugees do not have the opportunity to make a free choice about whether or not to return home. When refugees are provided with an opportunity to make a free choice, they can compare their information obtained concerning events at home with what they know about events in exile. If they perceive an advantage of returning home, then repatriation may begin. Where refugees are affected by forces that are mainly beyond their control, the decision making process is bypassed and the refugees lose control. Figure 3.2 shows how the various agents that transmit information interact and affect the decision-making process. While events in exile are perceived directly by the refugees, events at home are not. Information flows to the refugees indirectly, through official sources and from

Figure 3.2 Information and Decision-Making Model



early returnees. The expanded information-decision model differentiates between these two situations.

Conflict-Resolved Information and Decision-Making

Following the resolution of a conflict, refugees must make a decision about their future. For most refugees, the decision is a simple one: they will return home as soon as is possible. At the end of a conflict, the refugees' decision-making process may not be affected by external agents and the refugees are able to make a free choice. Particularly following the end of a liberation struggle, refugees look forward to returning to a new state and starting a new life. For many refugees, the most important decision that they must make is the timing of their return home and whether or not they should participate in an official repatriation program.

Prior to deciding to return, refugees seek specific information about their home areas. The sources of this information, as described previously, can be both official and unofficial. The information that the refugees most urgently require at this time is the condition of their own homes or farms. Informal sources, such as early repatriates or family members can be particularly useful in providing this type of information. NGOs and UNHCR can provide more broad-based information regarding the possibility of official repatriation programs and regional security.

Other events at home on which the refugees may base their repatriation decision include agricultural seasons and kin relationships. The onset of an agricultural season may compel refugees to return home quickly. Being able to plant and harvest a first crop in a timely fashion can also improve the refugees chances of rapidly becoming self-sufficient. Many refugees returning to Zimbabwe following independence timed their returns in order to plant crops immediately upon arrival. With this foresight, 600,000 returning refugees relied on food aid for only one agricultural season (Jackson 1991, p. 46). In addition, refugees' families may play an important role in the timing of

the return home. Families who have sent some members home early to scout conditions may be willing to return home more quickly in order to reunite the family unit.

The conditions in exile that can affect the repatriation decision for refugees include the activities of UNHCR, governments, NGOs and liberation/political fronts. As noted previously, the implementation of official repatriation exercises can reduce the amount of spontaneous repatriation. Political fronts can move to repatriate some refugees quickly in order to affect the outcome of an election. In addition, such factors as the refugees' employment and economic situation come in to play.

Unresolved Conflict Information and Decision-Making

Refugees who do not expect the resolution of a conflict in the near future still seek information about their home areas. Refugees are aware that conflicts ebb and flow and areas that were unsafe can become safe over a period of time. For refugees in some situations, it is the conditions in exile that become the most important determinant as to whether they decide to return home or not (Cuny and Stein 1992, p. 20). Refugees in both organized or spontaneous settlements who are unable to obtain land, grow food or earn money may consider repatriation as their best option. In some extreme situations, overcrowding and disease in refugee camps can force refugees to return home before they consider it completely safe to do so.

Refugees repatriating before a conflict is resolved, like those returning in peace, need to know specific details about their homes. An understanding of the security, situation, both at home and along the repatriation route, are an essential part of making an informed decision. No matter how bad the conditions might be in exile, refugees are unlikely to return to an area known to be unsafe. The refugees also need to know that food and water are readily available at home.

Especially while a conflict is in progress, at home or in the host country, or when host governments want to be rid of refugees, there can be some limitation placed

on the refugees' decision-making. The limitation on the repatriation decision can be as simple as a host government distorting information, or as extreme as the outright *refoulement* of refugees.

An example of deteriorating conditions in the host country overtaking the decision-making process and starting a repatriation occurred in Somalia in 1991. While the political situation in parts of Ethiopia was slowly improving, following the victory of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), conditions in the country remained unstable enough to preclude a large-scale repatriation from Somalia. However, with the sudden deterioration of conditions in Somalia following the overthrow of Siad Barre, up to 500,000 refugees returned rapidly to Ethiopia (Gallagher and Martin 1992, p. 28). The situation was made more complex because the refugees, still concerned about security in their home areas, did not return there immediately, but settled in camps just inside the Ethiopian border.

Security concerns also affected repatriation to Somalia from Kenya in 1994. Plans for Somali refugees returning from Kenya called for a large proportion to travel home on foot. The distance to be covered by the refugees was at least 290 kilometres, for most people a twenty-one day walk (Waldron and Hasci 1995, p. 68). In addition, most of the journey was to be undertaken through the semi-desert, in which the security situation remained precarious. Plans for the repatriation called for the refugees to be provided with just enough relief assistance to get them to their destination, so as to deter any reverse migration to Kenya. Increased insecurity and a reduction of rations at refugee camps in Kenya precipitated the repatriation. While the refugees understood the unstable security situation along the route and at home, the reduction of rations forced many refugees to return reluctantly to Somalia.

SUMMARY

The decision to repatriate is the first of many steps that refugees take to reintegrate themselves into their homelands. While in many cases refugees are allowed to freely choose when and how to return home, some recent repatriation experiences in Africa have called this into question. The model of information and decision-making presented in this chapter provides the basis for the typology of repatriation that follows. The model presents information and decision-making as the foundation that differentiates between the ideal of truly voluntary repatriation and different types of coerced repatriation. The typology that follows integrates the model of the decision-making process with refugees' social and external contexts to determine the degree of *voluntariness* of a repatriation.