

**Feature****Development****A New and Challenging Role for UNHCR**

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

To be able to live in one's own home in one's own country is probably something most of us take for granted. Yet events around the world have proved that even this basic human right is not guaranteed. For the 23 million refugees all over the world going home is a painfully far off dream. Yet whether it is the Bosnians or Rwandans or the Rohingyas we are talking of, the hope of repatriation is what keeps them alive and enables them to bear the extreme suffering that is part of being a refugee.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) has been one of the most active international organizations in helping to sustain this hope and bring about concrete results in the direction of repatriation. In a post cold war era when ethnic strife is at its peak all over the world, UNHCR has undergone a dramatic change, from being merely a charitable organization to one that is directly involved in helping to solve conflicts. Irene Khan, Special Assistant to UNHCR's High Commissioner Ogata, explains the organization's new and challenging role in various parts of the world where the task is not just repatriating refugees from the country of asylum but often from the country at war.

Irene remarks that the refugee problem which involves huge influxes of people into a country, is no longer regarded as just a human rights issue but a political one. The international community in the post cold war era, is interested in rapid solutions to the refugee problem, thus increasing the pressure on an organization like UNHCR. "Before the cold war," says Irene, "we (UNHCR) had no presence in Eastern Europe; now we have offices in Moscow and Tajikistan which has half a million displaced people, from the Tajik civil war whom we have helped to return to Abkhazia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The task at hand has become more difficult for UNHCR, she adds, because of the complex political problems in the countries where the refugees are trapped. This is

especially true of Bosnia and Rwanda where many UNHCR staff have been killed. "In Rwanda," says Irene, "the situation is very difficult in terms of security, health care, sanitation etc and the problem is

sible and so preparedness is the best first step. UNHCR has emergency teams, stock piles, emergency funds and stand by arrangements to act quickly and efficiently in immediate situations. "In the case of Bosnia, for example", says the UNHCR official, "we used military resources of various countries; we had aircrafts at our disposal to fly emergency goods to Bosnia".

Although UNHCR cannot intervene with force, its presence is a strong deterrent. There are 600 staff members in Bosnia where UNHCR is helping not just refugees but victims of conflict. This represents a new challenge for

UNHCR tries to influence the warring factions with its presence, buying time for the people and urging the political leaders to stop the fighting, which is the only solution. Although peace is still far off, Irene feels that UNHCR has been successful, in a modest way, to help many of the refugees. "We helped them through a very difficult winter and we hope by next spring, the situation will be such that UNHCR can scale down its assistance since people will be able to help themselves."

UNHCR's increased involvement in the world is evident from the increase in budget and staff over the last three years. In 1991, says Irene, the organisation was operating

offices to be established in the Arakan State.

UNHCR presence in Myanmar has given enough confidence to the Rohingyas, says Irene who has been actively involved in their repatriation. "When we come back to the camps (from Myanmar) and tell them that they will be safe, there is a greater willingness on their part to go back." In addition, UNHCR has undertaken macro projects worth 16 million dollars to improve the socio-economic conditions the refugees will go back to. "We are hoping others such as UNICEF, UNDP will join; if the conditions improve then this may avoid a repetition of this kind of exodus", adds the Bangladeshi born Irene.

There are of course limitations that threaten to undermine UNHCR's efforts around the world. Security is one of the prime concerns for the organisation which has already lost twelve of its people in Bosnia. "They were actually targeted in order to disrupt aid," Irene comments. Sometimes political forces try to manipulate UNHCR for their own interests which may threaten the organisation's credibility. "We have to be careful how we work so that we are not used by political parties or anywhere else," adds the Harvard educated UNHCR official. Being on a voluntary budget is also a limitation especially in places like Rwanda where resources are not enough to cope with the growing crisis. Finally, there are constraints on human resource management capacity. Training takes time, time that is just not there when emergency strikes.

As war rages on in Bosnia, Rwanda, Yemen and new conflicts erupt every day, UNHCR will have to find new ways to deal with the growing numbers of refugees caught in the middle of war. Yet despite all the drawbacks, there is always new hope. "If we look at South Africa, Mozambique or Afghanistan, we see that a lot of people are going home; everyday, all over the world, 10,000 people are being displaced and 5,000 are going home," remarks Irene.



Irene Khan



Caught between violence and displacement — a Rwandan refugee is pushed back by a Zairean paratrooper, a part of the effort to control refugee flow leaving Rwanda. — AFP

further complicated because of the conflict between two communities".

In recent years UNHCR's strategy has been prevention, preparedness and finding solutions. Prevention, continues Irene, is possible by addressing the root causes of the conflict that force people to flee whether it is human rights violations or socio-economic pressures. This, however, she admits is in most cases impos-

UNHCR; it is easy to protect refugees where they cross the border but now we are looking after people in unstable conditions which are dangerous even for our own staff." So far already 12 UNHCR staff have been killed in the war in Bosnia.

The solution strategy involves creating conditions that will enable refugees to go home. In a case like Bosnia where the bloodshed contin-

ues, with 500 million dollars and 2000 people compared to the present budget of 1.3 billion dollars and a staff of 4,000.

One of UNHCR's success stories includes the repatriation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to Myanmar, their place of origin. Last July, the High Commissioner went personally to Myanmar to sign an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with its government which resulted in of-

ficials, and the use of locally available low cost or throwaway materials was promoted. So instead of buying fish feed, farmers used cow dung, duck weed, soft grass, leaves and rice bran from the household and surrounding fields and pathways. There was an initial reluctance but over time the farmers themselves experimented with different foodstuffs and showed great initiative. Today, people farm their back yards in water that once was idle and have a source of either protein which is cheap, easy to raise, available and good to eat, and a good source of income.

The only major problem facing this project is how to ensure the continuing supply of sufficient numbers, variety and quality of fish fry and hatchlings to the many eager peasants who can see the benefits to their families from pisciculture. The benefits from both permanent and seasonal fish farming are being discovered by the participants in this experiment, and noticed by their neighbours. In this way, ODA's support will reach out to help improve the lot of many poor and landless who are surrounded by the fertile waters of Bangladesh.

the goal of "better standards of living in larger freedom."

And the role of women? "Women are not asked but they are the answer", said BMZ State Secretary Hans-Peter Reznik cryptically at the yearly conference of Inter Press Service (IPS) held in Bonn recently while underlining the participation of women as an essential pre-condition for the success of development policy.

Among other objectives fully supported by German development policy are gender equity in universal basic education by the year 2015, reduction not only in infant mortality but also in maternal mortality, gender equality in terms of the changing roles of men and women, and a more intensified co-operation with the non-governmental organisations in the mobilisation of public support for the cause of population control. Importantly, the family planning measures supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation (BMZ) take well into account the cultural, religious and social susceptibilities of the people in the partner countries and the respect for human dignity.

Whither a global society? If social justice has to provide an even keel, the role and advancement of women cannot be ignored in its dynamics. The World Summit for Social Development scheduled for March 1995 in Copenhagen, which will deal with real, tangible and complex issues of importance to all societies, will find the German government acting in unison towards

**Helping the Small Fries Grow**

by M Abul Khair

of landless peasants), a generation of successful and independent fish farmers have now been created.

The project then switched to demonstrating aquaculture techniques in the seasonal

ponds and ditches that are left behind by the monsoons and river floods each year. The intention here was to use the development motivation and experiences of households, which were members of RDPS.



Reaping the benefits of fish farming

In a world increasingly driven by political, economic and social turmoil, the yearning of mankind for a humane and civil global society is both natural and understandable. The plethora of problems besetting the world today such as environmental destruction, climate change and migratory movements worldwide can only be addressed through international co-operation. By the same token, it has come to be accepted that development cannot be reduced to merely economic terms but rather that it rests on a political and social framework promoting development, especially the advancement of the building of a civil society.

The German government has particularly demonstrated both its conceptual clarity as well as its international responsibilities in the field of sustainable human development, embracing the political, economic and social spheres. Right from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio where the Agenda 21 incorporated a time table of environmental issues in the context of development and planned action in connection therewith, the German Government has reflected its consonance with international thinking by the focal points of combating poverty, environmental protection and education already in place at the core of its development policy

and the measures drawn up for implementation both officially and through non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

One of the prominent planks of German development co-operation been its commitment to environmental and resources protection and which in recent years has been considerably enhanced. With an outlay of some DM 1 billion — more than one quarter of total German Aid commitments bilaterally — in 1993 on this sector, the government also allocated nearly DM 300 million towards forest development and preservation annually thereof, making Germany the largest bilateral aid donor in this area. In other words, every fourth deutschmark in bilateral aid goes toward resources protection.

The development policy concept of the German government embraces fundamental human rights and freedom for all peoples. The Vienna conference on human rights that upheld democracy, rule of law, development, human rights and the basic freedoms of the citizens has found German development policy criteria absolutely in line with universal values. Their expression has been through a focus on projects and programmes designed to benefit the poor and the underprivileged so as to realise the participatory approach to development. By the same token, the German objective has been the promotion of education, literacy, training of skills and human resource development.

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nomic imperative of improving living standards of men and women, the necessity of integrating family planning and contraceptive services with health care.

Through the newly established Global Environment Facility (GEF), the German government has strived to ensure an efficient and transparent management structure of GEF and has contributed DM 395 million to the total budget of US\$ 2 billion, for 1994-1996, taking a share of 12 per cent approxi-

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**Striving for a Global Society**

by M N Hebbal

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"Another essential condition for a just, global society is the liberalisation of world markets.. and the recent conclusion of the GATT Uruguay Round is a pointer to the increasing scope for the poorer developing countries in the world order", stated State Secretary Repnik, expressing bright hopes of mankind moving steadily towards a humane global society in the not too distant future.

**Training for Human Resource Development in Banks**

by A T M Abdus Shahid

through training. Modern management is based on human psychology. This modern management technique can be acquired through training.

At present almost all the banks both in public sector banks and private sector banks, including Bangladesh Bank, have their training institutes to provide training to their different categories of human resources both officers and non-officers. At the national level there is Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) to provide training to mid and senior level officers of different categories of our banks.

BIBM study on "Assessment of Training Needs of the Banking Sector of Bangladesh" done in 1993 reveals that although a lot of off-the-job training avenues have been opened in our banking industry to cater to the training needs of its human resources yet the percentage of trained human resources (off-the-job) is not encouraging compared to total human resources working in individual banks. The study also reveals that whatever emphasis is given by banks in training the human resources it is mainly meant for training the officers. Very negligible emphasis is given in training the non-officers.

As a national level training institute in the banking sector of Bangladesh and considering its target group among other activities BIBM generally conducts about 50 training courses and 15 workshops every year in various banking and non-banking fields. Trainers' Training, Research Methodology, Management of Creativity, Human Resource Management, and Time Management. Besides the Institute arranges a good number of seminars on banking and allied fields every year. BIBM always chalks out training programmes on the basis of the training needs of the banking sector of Bangladesh. Individual training institutes of our banks also provides training to their own human resources and they also chalk out training programmes for their human resources considering training needs. BIBM generally trains 2000 officers of different categories of various banks every year.

Inspite of training provided by the individual training institutes of our Banks, BIBM and other training institutes it seems that training is not getting proper importance. But without proper training of the human resources banking activities cannot be performed properly. It is a known fact that the stuck-up amount of our banks is now around 30%. Among other reasons the causes for this stuck-up is improper appraisal of loan proposals/projects and inadequate supervision and follow-up/monitoring and reporting of loan cases. Without proper knowledge and skill of project appraisal technique nobody can appraise project/proposal properly. These knowledge and skills of project appraisal technique and monitoring and reporting can be attained

(g) Training should be followed up efficiently and effectively and necessary measures need to be taken on the basis of follow-up of training.

(h) Banks should give attention to other mechanisms of Human Resource Development side by side with training.

Human Resource Development is a continuous process by which organisation tries to develop potentials of its human resources. In turn organisation also gets benefits out of this process.

The writer is a Faculty Member, Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM).

child workers even though he/she has the time, depends on the whims and fancies of the employer for access to school.

There are other child workers, like tempo helpers, loaders, hawkers, and on-tiffin delivery, busy on their little feet, with scarce time and energy to attend to the rigours of schooling.

The ideal way to meet education needs of working children would be an arrangement based on the terms of the working child. Perhaps something like a 'Drop In Centre' open all day, with facilities for recreation, education and counsel for working children who choose to drop in at any time of the day. The children would learn as they participate in the discovery process of cognitive and social awareness.

In Western countries, advocates of "deschoolers" (ivan



Going to school at their own time

through training. Modern management is based on human psychology. This modern management technique can be acquired through training.

At present there is a division or department in modern organisation named Human Resource Development Division/Department (HRDD) which looks after training of human resources. In our country only few banks established this division but their functioning regarding training is just nominal. In other banks where there is no HRDD, Personnel Division (PD) looks into training.

**Some Suggestions**

(a) For developing human resources of our banks through training (off-the-job) it is necessary to arrange training for both officers and non-officers. Non-officers should not be neglected as regards training. Individual training institutes should arrange training for non-officers assessing their training needs.

(b) Emphasis should be given to train officers of different categories including higher management people in adequate number. As BIBM can accommodate large number of trainees more participants may be sent by banks to BIBM training courses and workshops. Besides, BIBM should arrange short training programmes for higher management people.

(c) All the banks should have HRDD and the activities of the existing HRDD need to be geared up. HRDD will look after different aspects of training.

(d) Necessary care should be taken for proper job rotation in the case of on-the-job training.

(e) Top management of the banks should keep sharp eyes on training of human resources.

(f) Alongwith other fields of training emphasis should be given to behavioural fields of training such as quality circles, personal growth, transactional analysis, working together, stress management etc. especially for mid and senior level officers.

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**Any Time School for Working Children**

by Khursheed Erfan Ahmed

child labour is a serious development problem for Bangladesh as it implies the exclusion of almost 12m children from the formal education system.

Government's formal schooling prioritizes the enrolled child's ability to keep regular and punctual attendance. 'Drop outs' are defined as those who are irregular attendants. This is also true of some of the better known non-formal NGO education institutes.