



Forced Migration Online (FMO) FMO Research Guide on Local Integration

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<http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo045/>

Date: August 2008

Last updated: 6 August 2008

Abstract

This research guide provides an in-depth examination of local integration as a durable solution and focuses on three key developments within research, policy and practice. Firstly, it looks at local integration at a policy level, as a potential durable solution to the impasse of protracted refugee situations. Secondly, it examines the increased policy, scholarly and advocacy interest related to the issue of self-settled refugees. Thirdly, contemporary work on 'refugee livelihoods' has revealed that integration can be a form of livelihood strategy for refugees. It also examines local integration as a process of interaction between refugees and host communities, examining the issue of 'de facto' local integration as well as self-settled refugees. As such, this research guide will also examine the implications of an 'actor-oriented' view of local integration. This requires analysis of what integration implies for refugees and host community members. Fieldwork-derived examples are presented that display the importance of host and refugee relations in the process of integration, thus emphasizing the 'local' in local integration. The research guide aims to outline and delineate these debates and issues. Beginning with definitional issues, the guide will also outline the various methodological challenges in researching local integration. Some of these issues are generalizable to research in forced migration more broadly. Nonetheless, researching local integration does raise some specific challenges, including identification of integrated refugees and methods of measuring integration.

Keywords: Local integration; durable solutions; self-settled refugees; *de facto* integration; refugee livelihoods.

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1. Overview

1.1 Introduction

In the past few years, interest in local integration – as a durable solution and as a social, economic and legal process for refugees – has increased. This research guide focuses on local integration as a durable solution, and also examines local integration as a process of interaction between refugees and host communities, examining the issue of self-settled refugees and ‘de facto’ local integration (Jacobsen, 2001). In 2001, Jacobsen stated that ‘[i]n recent years there has been little research on the process of local integration and its consequences for refugees and their hosts’ (2001:4). However, the volume of literature and analysis has subsequently expanded, due to a number of factors which shall be now examined.

Firstly, local integration is seen, at a *policy level*, as a *potential durable solution to the impasse of protracted refugee situations*. It thereby ensures refugee wellbeing, addressing the concerns that host governments and donors alike share with regard to protracted refugee situations. A protracted refugee situation is defined by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as a case ‘in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo’ (2004:1), often in refugee camps or settlements in developing host countries. Of central concern in protracted refugee situations is that often refugees’ ‘basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile’ (UNHCR, 2004:1). At the end of 2003, there were 38 different protracted refugee situations in the world, accounting for some 6.2 million refugees in total. Some analysts have proposed a revitalized focus on and understanding of local integration as a way to address protracted refugee situations (Crisp, 2004; Jacobsen, 2001; Dryden-Peterson & Hovil, 2003). Therefore, local integration has been the focus of a number of policy processes at UNHCR headquarters level, including the Agenda for Protection, the Framework for Durable Solutions and the 2005 UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion on Local Integration.

Secondly, there is increased policy, scholarly and advocacy interest related to the issue of *self-settled refugees*. These are refugees who settle outside of designated camps and refugee settlements. Analysis of their conditions, motivations and economic, social and political behaviour offers insight into informal local integration. Literature that has examined the conditions of self-settled and urban refugees has often highlighted the process, opportunities and challenges of *de facto* local integration. Recent research – for example, by the Refugee Law Project in Uganda – has focused on the issue of self-settled refugees, demonstrating that the field of forced migration studies has been overly concerned with refugees who are thus defined by policy frameworks, and has therefore often missed a large part of the reality of forced migration on the ground. In general, in the field of forced migration research, research questions and findings have naturally been skewed towards refugees who are readily identifiable and usually those who are *less* integrated - often in camps or settlements – or are prevented from integrating through various policy frameworks. Therefore, many of the hypotheses and statements in this research guide are necessarily tentative, as there are numerous gaps in knowledge and literature.

Finally, a focus on ‘refugee livelihoods’ has revealed that integration can be a form of livelihood strategy for refugees. As such, this research guide will also examine the implications of an ‘actor-oriented’ view of local integration. This requires analysis of

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what integration implies for refugees and host community members. Fieldwork-derived examples are presented that display the importance of host and refugee relations in the process of integration, thus emphasizing the 'local' in local integration.

This research guide aims to outline and delineate these debates and issues. Beginning with definitional issues, the guide will also outline the various methodological challenges in researching local integration. Some of these issues are generalizable to research in forced migration more broadly. Nonetheless, researching local integration does raise some specific challenges, including identification of integrated refugees and methods of measuring integration.

Having defined local integration and outlined the questions of research methodology and approach, the Guide looks at integration from a number of perspectives. It analyses *local integration as a durable solution*, highlighting the reasons why local integration as a durable solution is less accepted or utilized than repatriation; analysing the impact of host government policies on local integration; and examining the recent policy debates and developments regarding local integration. It also discusses '*de-facto*' local integration, examining the situation of self-settled refugees and the way in which refugees utilize local relationships and livelihood strategies to integrate. The analysis of *de facto* local integration and local integration as a process actually challenges the way in which local integration has been defined and studied from the perspective of formal policies. Polzer (2005a; 2005b) and Bakewell's work (2000a; 2000b; 2000c) clarifies the need to analyse these questions from the perspective of refugees and host communities.

Finally, throughout the guide and in Section 4 in particular, key pieces of policy and academic literature are presented, as sources of further study in this field. This research guide does not purport to be an authoritative collection of all information and analysis on local integration, and in fact does not engage fully with some bodies of literature that may be relevant - for example, the literature focusing on urban refugees (see separate research on [Urban Refugees](#)). However, the aim is to provide an entry point for thinking about local integration, an outline of recent interest and policy developments, and guide to further research in the field.

1.2 Parameters of the research guide

Focus on local integration of refugees in countries of first asylum

All forms of 'durable solutions' imply a form of integration: repatriation implies reintegration into countries of origin; and resettlement implies a process of integration into a third country. However, this research guide focuses on local integration of refugees in countries of first asylum. Analysis of the issue of integration in the context of resettlement and repatriation is better placed in a broad analysis of these two durable solutions. Moreover, as this discussion highlights, the opportunities and obstacles to local integration in developing host countries are quite specific to the context of large-scale hosting of refugees in poorer regions. Both from an empirical perspective, and a policy perspective, integration as formulated in the durable solutions of repatriation and resettlement is quite different, and engages different actors and tools. Consequently, this research guide will not specifically address integration in the context of resettled or repatriated refugees. UNHCR (2004a, Chapter 2) provides a good overview of some of the issues relating to integration and



resettlement. For more on repatriation and resettlement, see research guides on [Return of Forced Migrants](#) and [Reparations, Reconciliation and Forced Migration](#).

Distinction between self-reliance and local integration

Self-reliance and local integration are often mentioned interchangeably in the policy literature, or are at least presented as being inextricably connected. Self-reliance is often seen as a necessary precursor to local integration. This research guide will analyse this aspect of the policy literature where necessary, although will not examine in-depth the concept of 'self-reliance' itself. Moreover, from an empirical perspective, the interrelationship between the two policies and processes should not be overstated. UNHCR has argued that '[t]he process of local integration is greatly facilitated by refugees becoming self-reliant, since they are better able to interact with the local population economically and socially, and thereby contribute to local development as an asset rather than a "burden"' (UNHCR, 2002:3). However, UNHCR argues that there is a distinction between self-reliance and local integration, in that local integration is a durable solution, and is 'based on the assumption that refugees will remain in their country of asylum permanently and find a solution to their plight in that State', while self-reliance 'does not presuppose that refugees will find a durable solution in the country of asylum,' and can be seen in the context of local integration as 'part of a continuum, progressively leading to local integration' (Crisp, 2002:3). Therefore, throughout this research guide, the interrelationship between self-reliance and local integration is acknowledged. However, the two are not necessarily one and the same. In fact, this author's research in Uganda showed that activities to promote self-reliance can in fact occur in isolation from broader attempts to encourage local integration (Meyer, 2006).

Distinction between local integration and local settlement

This research guide also establishes a distinction between local integration and local settlement of refugees, a difference which can often be quite difficult to detect. As Crisp argues, '[t]he relationship between the concept of local integration and that of local settlement is a somewhat ambiguous one, complicated by the tendency of some commentators to use them interchangeably' (Crisp, 2004:3). Kibreab has pointed out that 'in the majority of cases researchers on African refugees do not make a distinction between local integration...and local settlement. The two concepts are used as synonyms. As a result the literature on African refugees in this respect is fraught with confusion and lack of clarity' (Kibreab, 1989:469). Furthermore, Kibreab observes that local settlement systems are not conducive to social, economic or political integration, and that the 'goals of local integration...and local settlement are often incompatible' (Kibreab, 1989:470). In order to avoid the conceptual confusion about the two distinct processes and approaches to refugee problems, Crisp's delineation will be adopted. He states that:

The notion of local integration is based on the assumption that refugees will remain indefinitely in their country of asylum and find a solution to their plight in that state. Ideally, but not necessarily, that will involve the acquisition of citizenship. Local settlement, however, does not presuppose that refugees will find a durable solution in their country of asylum. In some instances, locally settled refugees might indeed remain in exile, becoming progressively integrated there in legal, economic and social



terms. But in other instances, local settlement might be a temporary phase, allowing refugees to live with a degree of dignity, security and prosperity, pending the time when they are able to benefit from the solution of voluntarily repatriation (Crisp, 2004:3).

Throughout this research guide, an attempt is made to see the two processes and approaches as distinct – although sometimes overlapping - and often quite divorced in terms of aim and outcome. The central focus is local integration, with local settlement addressed where relevant to understand its role as an obstacle or opportunity towards the local integration of refugees.

Focus on refugees as opposed to other forced migrants

The question of integration within new host communities could also be addressed regarding other categories of forced migrants, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and development-induced displacees. However, while recognizing that some of the issues addressed could also be applied to these other groups, this research guide will analyse refugees as opposed to the broader category of forced migrants. This is for three central reasons. Firstly, as a durable solution, local integration very clearly only refers to refugees who fall under the definition and mandate of UNHCR. Secondly, due to the fact that local integration as a durable solution is related to refugees as opposed to other forced migrants, the bulk of the literature on local integration is focused on refugees. Some literature addressing internal displacement, and specifically, the question of ‘when does displacement end’ does look at the issue of integration, but this literature does not necessarily easily or logically fit into the wider body of literature on local integration. Finally, some of the issues and actors involved in local integration are specific to the case of refugees in asylum countries, such as policies and relations with host governments or the actions of UNHCR.

Broad focus drawing on some empirical examples

While drawing on a small number of empirical examples of successful local integration, as well as a few cases of self-settlement that have been studied, the author recognizes that the field of empirical research on questions of integration has been quite limited, and that drawing conclusions from these empirical examples is not only premature, but perhaps misleading. Therefore, the research guide maintains a broad focus, drawing on empirical examples and case studies where appropriate to explore some key points in more depth.

1.3 Definitions

Local integration as a durable solution

Local integration is one of the three so-called ‘durable solutions’ for refugees, the others being repatriation to country of origin and resettlement in a third country. Local integration is defined as having three, interrelated aspects:

- i) it is a legal process – ‘whereby refugees are granted a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements by the host state,’ including ‘the right to seek employment, to engage in other income-generating activities, to own and dispose of property, to enjoy freedom of movement and to



- have access to public services such as education,' and eventuating in permanent residence rights and possibly the acquisition of citizenship in the country of asylum;
- ii) it is an economic process – whereby refugees attain a degree of self-reliance, establish sustainable livelihoods and 'become progressively less reliant on state aid or humanitarian assistance'; and
 - iii) it is a social and cultural process – through accommodation with the local community, local integration 'enables refugees to live amongst or alongside the host population, without discrimination or exploitation and contribute actively to the social life of their country of asylum' (UNHCR 2004:2; Crisp, 2004:1-2)

This definition emphasizes the granting of rights to refugees, and is derived in relation to Article 34 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which encourages states to facilitate naturalization of refugees. Local integration as a durable solution is often seen as necessitating eventual granting of legal status, which enables 'access to civil, socioeconomic and cultural rights and, to a certain degree, political rights' and ensures that the refugees have found a durable solution and are no longer in need of international protection (UNHCR 2004a:7).

Kibreab's definition is also conceptualized along these lines. He states that integration is 'an economic, social and cultural process by which refugees become members of the host society on a permanent basis irrespective of how things develop in their countries of origin. Refugees are accepted on a permanent basis. This is followed by legal integration whereby the refugees concerned acquire the citizenship of the country of their asylum through naturalization' (Kibreab, 1989:469).

The UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion on Local Integration also emphasizes the legal, economic and social aspects of local integration. This policy-level analysis promotes the durable solution of local integration for refugees for whom resettlement is not accessible and repatriation may not be possible. For example, this may be due to particular protection needs, particularly traumatic experiences prompting flight or due to social (even familial), cultural and economic links with their country of asylum (UNHCR, 2005).

De facto local integration

The definition of local integration, provided above, emphasizes the economic, social and political aspects of local integration. This often incorporates the situation of self-settled refugees, who Jacobsen argues may have become 'unofficially integrated after they have lived in and been accepted by the community, and have attained self-sufficiency' (Jacobsen, 2001:9). She labels this as '*de facto*' local integration and conceptualizes refugees as being *de facto* integrated when they are:

- are not in physical danger (and do not live under the threat of *refoulement*);
- are not confined to camps or settlements, and have the right of return to their home country;
- are able sustain livelihoods, through access to land or employment, and can support themselves and their families;
- have access to education or vocational training, health facilities, and housing; and



- are socially networked into the host community, so that intermarriage is common, ceremonies like weddings and funerals are attended by everyone, and there is little distinction between the standard of living of refugees and the host community (Jacobsen, 2001:9).

Jacobsen emphasizes that refugees who are *de facto* integrated may still have insecure and temporary legal status, and argues that a 'reasonable degree of human security for refugees in this situation would require adjustment of their legal status to make their residence status secure' (Jacobsen, 2001:9).

Banki (2004:2) has also proposed a framework of understanding integration as an intermediate solution for refugees. Through her discussion, she defines intermediate integration as referring 'to the ability of the refugee to participate with relative freedom in the economic and communal life of the host region'. She argues that high levels of refugee integration are characterized by the following factors:

- refugees are not restricted in their movements;
- refugees own land or appear to have official access to it;
- refugees participate in the local economy;
- refugees are moving in the direction of self-sufficiency;
- refugees are able to utilize local services such as health facilities;
- refugee children attend local schools; and
- refugees are dispersed among the local population.

Kuhlman's analysis of integration emphasizes economic aspects, but within this identifies the following factors as key for successful integration:

- the socio-cultural change they undergo permits them to maintain an identity of their own and to adjust psychologically to their new situation;
- friction between host populations and refugees is not worse than within the host population itself; and
- refugees do not encounter more discrimination than exists between groups previously settled within the host society (Kuhlman, 1991).

These definitions of *de facto* local integration are useful in their emphasis on relations with local community members, delineation of key economic, social and cultural processes, and presentation of a framework that captures the reality of integration for many self-settled refugees. Moreover, they emphasize the need for refugees to establish viable livelihoods in order to integrate fully.

An actor-oriented definition of local integration

Despite being distinguishable from the policy-oriented, 'durable solution' definition of local integration, the *de facto* local integration perspective also places emphasis on the role of external actors, UNHCR, host governments and NGOs in facilitating *de facto* integration. Moreover, proponents of this view often make an argument relating to the necessity of local integration for refugee protection. As Jacobsen states (2001:3), as 'an alternative to camps and the warehousing model...the old and neglected durable solution of local integration can and should be revitalized'. Jacobsen argues that, 'because many self-settled refugees do become integrated into the host community, largely without official assistance, a policy of assisted local integration in which refugees, the local population and the host government are



encouraged and enabled to work together, is potentially workable in protracted situations' (Jacobsen, 2001:4).

On the other hand, Bakewell and Polzer, amongst others, emphasize an understanding of local integration that is 'actor-oriented' in its analysis of the actions and understandings of refugees and local host community members as the key determinants of local integration. Bakewell's work on Angolan refugees in Zambia revealed the extent to which Angolans did not see themselves as 'repatriating refugees' but rather as migrating villagers, and that the level of integration evidenced in this case was an outcome not of external interventions, but local agency and actions. He concluded that the 'wide gap in understanding is a reflection of very different interests in the processes of integrating newcomers and controlling nationality and refugees. It results in interventions which are inappropriate as they aim to solve refugee problems seen by outsiders rather than responding to the priorities of local people' (2000c:356).

Polzer's work argues that 'we need a broad and flexible political understanding of integration processes that goes beyond many of the assumptions and habits that the international refugee protection system has developed over the past thirty years.' She suggests a model for:

analysing integration contexts in which refugees, just like other political actors, creatively negotiate with local actors for access to power and resources. Although some targeted interventions can act as catalysts for integration, it is a fundamentally refugee- and host-driven process which is often hindered, rather than assisted, by 'outside' intervention (Polzer, 2005a).

This implies the necessity of examining integration as a process that is driven by local actors, and starts from the perspective of the refugees. Polzer proposes (2005a:2-3) that what is missing in the other definitions is a 'model for understanding the *process* through which integration is achieved, the actors involved and what may facilitate or constrain integration'. In fact, she maintains that the focus of other definitions on refugee rights, the Convention and institutions per se can obscure the reality of how refugees negotiate integration. As she argues, 'local integration often happens as a function of local relationships, in the absence of specific refugee protection interventions, and that it can be actively hindered by them' (Polzer, 2005a:7). Dividing the definitions in this way should not imply that the policy-level definition does not acknowledge local integration as a dynamic process. In fact, the 2005 UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion stated that,

local integration in the refugee context is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process, which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population

and also acknowledged that,

the process of local integration is complex and gradual, comprising three distinct but inter-related legal, economic, and social and cultural dimensions, all of which are important for



refugees' ability to integrate successfully as fully included members of society (UNHCR, 2005).

Websites

UNHCR (2004a) [Resettlement Handbook](#)

Fielden, Alexandra (2008) [Local integration: an under-reported solution to protracted refugee situations](#), *New Issues in Refugee Research: Research Paper No. 158*. Geneva: UNHCR.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Research on local integration of refugees

Existing literature

Research and literature focusing on local integration as a durable solution has developed significantly in recent years. Some of this literature emerges from policy processes that support implementing local integration in cases of protracted refugee situations, or advocating for greater freedoms for refugees to be able to achieve *de facto* integration or self-reliance (for example, Jacobsen, 2001; Crisp, 2004). Some of the literature that addresses debates regarding the assistance and protection of refugees, or specifically, the pros and cons of refugee camps and settlements, tangentially addresses the question of integration. For instance, those opposing camps and settlements have often argued their case by stating that these measures preclude refugee integration (Harrell-Bond, 1998; Crisp and Jacobsen, 1998; Black, 1998). Other works have examined the determinants of success for local integration and characteristics of forms of integration in different contexts. For example, Banki's analysis of intermediate term integration in Kenya, Nepal and Pakistan examines the variants of temporal considerations (the length of time that refugees have been in a host country), political factors (such as the relationship between sending and hosting countries), social factors (for example, ethnic or linguistic similarities) and the size of the refugee population as determinants of the level of integration. She focuses on 'the ways in which governments, laws, economies, geographies, ethnic groups, and individuals influence refugee integration in the intermediate term' (Banki, 2004:17).

However, it is notable that much of this research is based on data drawn from statistics, policy papers, secondary literature and interviews with policy makers and fieldworkers. It engages with a policy-level analysis of local integration, and has less emphasis on the perspective of refugees themselves. Moreover, striking within these analyses is a lack of analysis of the perspective of *local host community members*. This literature generally focuses on institutions such as UNHCR and host governments as the key actors determining local integration.

Much of the work of the Refugee Law Project in Uganda, based on fieldwork in refugee settlements and urban areas, has yielded refugee perspectives on local integration. Moreover, studies such as Bakewell's work on Angolans in Zambia (2000a; 2000b; and 2000c) and van Damme's work on Liberians in Guinea (1999) shed light on the dynamics of integration of self-settled refugees and different waves of refugees and their patterns of settlement. Other work has analyzed specific case



studies – for example, Guatemalans in Mexico – to bring to light the particular dynamics of integration in different contexts (Kauffer Michael, 2002). Bulcha's work on Ethiopian refugees in Sudan offers rich empirical analysis of the various forms of integration of refugees on a social, economic and political level (1988). For further discussion of these case studies, see Section 4.

2.2 Theoretical concerns in studying local integration

Identifying 'integrated refugees'

One major hurdle in researching local integration is identifying integrated refugees, including self-settled refugees. One possible approach to analysing local integration may be to look at the interactions between refugees living in more open settlements or camps and surrounding villagers. However, if the aim is to analyze self-settled integrated refugees, a key question becomes how to identify these integrated refugees. Self-settled refugees, by definition, have often been able to settle and establish livelihoods without external intervention. They may not have registered with UNHCR or the host government as refugees, and are therefore not included in official refugee statistics. Nor do they necessarily live in areas designated for refugees. They may be culturally and ethnically similar to local host communities, and have similar levels of wealth or wellbeing. Bakewell (2000c:364) found in his research on Angolan refugees in Zambia that '[t]he level of integration is such that there are no grounds for reliably distinguishing a refugee from a Zambian on the basis of any verifiable information'. A problem for a researcher in identifying integrated refugees may be that integrated refugees do not want to self-identify for fear of exclusion from access to services, losing employment, or being forced to resettle to camps and settlements. 'Identification' of integrated refugees poses a major methodological challenge.

Problems also emerge in the sampling of populations. Landau found, in presenting the problems associated with researching urban refugees, that '[w]hereas camps may be at least formally distinguished from the social, economic, and political processes surrounding them...such distinctions make little sense in urban areas' (Landau, 2004: 3), and the same can be said to be true of self-settled refugees, whether urban, peri-urban or rural. Jacobsen and Landau found that:

In humanitarian situations, access to forced migrants who do not live in camps is a major problem...Access difficulties stem from logistics (remote areas, bad roads, hidden communities), security problems, and lack of trust. Researchers tend to concentrate their activities in camps (or in resettlement countries) where refugees are more easily accessible, and where they can be identified by officials or aid organizations (2003:12).

Formal sampling is difficult, for reasons similar to those identified by Landau vis-à-vis the urban environment vs. the camp environment. He argues that whereas in camp settings there are 'often more or less accurate estimates of the size of one's intended study populations and their spatial distribution,' this is often not the case in the urban environment. Local officials may be able to shed some light on the extent of self-settled refugees in some areas, but data is usually not available on the size and characteristics of their population, data which is often available on camp populations from UNHCR and implementing partner NGOs.



'Measuring' integration

Measurement of local integration clearly requires a pre-defined notion of what integration constitutes, which may be difficult, as highlighted in the *Definitions* section of this research guide. Different variables may be emphasized in measuring integration through different lenses. For example:

- A definition of local integration that favours a policy-oriented analysis may focus on formal measures, such as right to work, issuing of identification cards or access to formal education;
- A definition of local integration that emphasizes economic integration and self-reliance may focus on aspects such as refugee livelihoods and standard of living vis-à-vis local host community members, access to markets, income generating activities, food consumption and health measures;
- A definition of local integration that emphasizes social relationships may focus on intermarriage rates, rate of interactions in economic and social spheres and quality of interactions; and
- A definition of local integration that emphasizes political integration may analyze identity and nationality, including formal naturalization rates or participation in local political institutions.

This list is by no means exhaustive, and in fact demonstrates that measurements of integration vary with emphasis and dynamics of the particular integration being studied. This often limits the amount of comparison that can be achieved between studies of integration of refugees.

Moreover, measurement of integration may be constrained or enabled by the specific research methods being used. For example, measuring economic integration from a more quantitative perspective may require access to data, such as commodity prices or patterns of market transactions, that may not exist for the particular communities. This author found difficulties in comparing the health outcomes for refugees and local host community members in Northwest Uganda. Paradoxically, data on health measures for refugees was readily accessible from the UNHCR implementing partner NGO that ran the refugee health centre, while the district government health department did not collect comparable data.

Different studies emphasize different aspects of integration. Bakewell highlights aspects of identity and labeling of refugees and local villagers, while analysing the social, political and economic aspects of integration. He analyses social interaction, including intermarriage and social gatherings, economic integration, including refugees and non-refugees' wealth and standard of living, land-size and ownership of livestock, and access to services, such as health and education (2000c). This author found observation of economic transactions and interaction at local markets illustrative of the differing levels of integration of Sudanese refugees in two different settlements in Northwest Uganda: Ikafe (in Yumbe district) and Imvepi (in Arua district). Polzer looks at Mozambican refugees who used social connections, such as shared ethnicity, language and culture, to acquire South African identity documents, which then enabled employment, housing, freedom of movement and political participation. They used 'connections, initiative and a supportive local social framework to make themselves a space in which to succeed in a hostile national environment' such that they became both legally and de facto integrated. This means they were able to exist 'without fearing physical attack or deportation, free to settle and move as they choose, able to sustain a livelihood, able to access social services such as education, health and social security, and able to socially interact and

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intermarry with locals' (2005b). Polzer challenges the very distinction between refugees and local host community members, in light of historical dynamics of migration and statehood in the area of South Africa she examined.

A further difficulty is the question of whether integration is being studied as a policy or a process. Many definitions emphasize the need to see integration as a process. However, some research projects by necessity are only able to capture a static picture of refugees' integration. Long-term research may be necessary to capture the process of integration, yet many long-term anthropological analyses of refugees have not had integration at the centre of their research questions.

Asking relevant questions

Given that measurements of integration rely on different definitions of integration, it is hard to define the 'correct' approach or questions to ask in researching local integration. On a practical basis, apart from defining a broad research question, researchers using interview or survey-based research methods may need to develop creative or non-traditional ways to inquire as to the integration of refugees. Bakewell states that in his research it was,

impossible today to categorize people as refugees in a meaningful way. [Therefore]...from the outset this study made no distinction between refugees and hosts and it concluded such categories are not salient in the context of the border villages...there were no clearly observable differences attributable to their group membership between the groups of those who might be considered as refugees (those who ran from the war in Angola), and non-refugees (2000c:361).

In this context, asking refugees questions that explicitly mention integration with local host community members may be irrelevant or yield flawed results. Questions may require engagement with the question of livelihoods. For example, asking refugees and non-refugees alike who they trade with, who they work for and who teaches their children at school or treats them in the health centres may produce a clearer picture of integration. Other methods may include Venn diagrams or mapping, which can display where and when refugees and non-refugees interact and in what spaces. Moreover, inquiring into integration may also necessitate a broader understanding of local power dynamics, local government institutions and community structures, as well as how refugee communities relate or integrate into these structures. The mere existence of parallel structures to local structures does not imply integration. For example, the Refugee Welfare Committees in Uganda have the same structure as the Local Committees established to represent Ugandan citizens in the local government system, but have very different levels of power and representation (Meyer, 2006; Dryden-Petersen and Hovil, 2003).

Websites:

Landau, Loren (2004) *Urban Refugees Research Guide*, at <http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo024/fmo024.pdf>

3. Integration

3.1 Integration as a durable solution

Overview of durable solutions

UNHCR is mandated to search for durable solutions for refugee situations. The first paragraph of the UNHCR statute refers to seeking 'permanent solutions for the problems of refugees'. The three durable solutions are resettlement of refugees in a third country, voluntary repatriation of refugees to their country of origin once the causes of flight are resolved, and local integration. The 1951 Convention envisaged local integration as an option for refugees in host asylum countries in Article 34, which discusses the naturalization of refugees in their host countries of asylum.

Research on local integration is often framed by analysts as important given the diminishing utilization of local integration as a durable solution, exacerbating the problem of protracted refugee situations. Chimni argues that the history of durable solutions is based on a shift from prioritization of resettlement of refugees to that of repatriation of refugees, due to certain ideological shifts affecting the principle of asylum (Chimni, 1999). Moreover, there has been a significant trend away from utilization of local integration as a durable solution, to the extent that Ferris has argued that '[a]lthough typically mentioned as the second durable solution, local integration has virtually dropped off the map' (Ferris 1996:11). Whereas in 1950, local integration was seen as the principle means of resolving refugee situations, this has shifted substantially. Crisp argues that the practice of local integration 'has been very limited in the years since the refugee problem became a worldwide phenomenon' (Crisp 2004:3). Analysts have specifically pointed to the decline of local integration in Africa. During the 1960s to the 1980s, many African countries had admitted large numbers of refugees and allowed for *de facto* local integration. By contrast, from the 1980s onwards refugees have been largely confined to camps or local settlements with limited freedom of movement.

Crisp outlines the reasons for this shift, which include:

- 'increased concern about the negative economic and environmental impact of large-scale refugee populations in countries which are struggling to meet the needs of their own citizens;
- the reluctance of host states to accommodate large numbers of refugees, resulting from a perception that the more prosperous members of the international community are not sufficiently committed to burden-sharing;
- a belief that exiled populations represent a threat to local, national and regional security, especially in situations where *bona fide* refugees are mixed with armed elements;
- popular antagonism to the presence of refugees, mobilized in some cases by the media and unscrupulous politicians; and,
- an increasingly restrictive asylum climate, associated with a fear that states are losing their ability to control the movement of people across international borders' (Crisp 2004:5).

Stein outlines additional reasons for host government reluctance to consider local integration, including the concern that support for refugees' political causes would be weakened by integration (for example, the Khmer in Thailand and Afghans in Pakistan); that the size of the refugee population may be too large to absorb; fears

that the opportunity for local integration would encourage more refugees to flee to the host country; and concerns about being accused of giving priority to refugees rather than citizens and creating economic competition in areas of scarcity (Stein 1986:274). Ferris adds the 'very real economic and political pressures' faced by host governments, particularly in light of recognition that permanent integration of refugees would pass on costs of supporting refugees to the host government. It is argued that Northern governments' restriction of asylum is setting an example whereby 'where Northern governments are competing with each other to restrict the entrance of asylum-seekers, it is unreasonable to expect Southern governments to embrace local integration' and concurs with Crisp's argument that 'opposition to local integration is a last-gasp effort to hold on to the principle of burden-sharing' (Crisp 1996:12).

Bakewell concludes in relation to durable solutions that 'voluntary repatriation has come to be seen by governments, international organizations and many academics as the optimum solution of these three, both in terms of desirability and feasibility' (2000a:42). The prioritization of repatriation – termed the 'hierarchy of durable solutions' – has evolved due to the geo-political, economic and social reasons outlined above, thereby demoting focus on the practice and policy of local integration.

Jacobsen (2001) and others have identified post-Cold War geopolitical shifts and increasing restrictions on asylum in developed countries as drivers of the reduction in the utilization of local integration. Jacobsen argues that such shifts 'occurred partly as a follow-on to the West's new reluctance to support local integration, and also because the presence of refugees was becoming increasingly problematic for host countries' (2001:2-3). Jacobsen also emphasizes that the form of local integration utilized widely until the 1980s fell short of full refugee status and legal integration, although it did allow for wide-ranging rights including access to livelihood opportunities, freedom of movement and access to land. Koser and Black point out the contingency of local integration and the complex factors required to facilitate it, whereby

'[w]hen numbers are perceived as manageable and there is a high degree of certainty that return will not be possible, then local integration is still an option which some African governments are prepared to entertain, especially if assistance for the process is available from the international community. However, where refugee displacements are substantial, where they are seen to impact negatively upon resources that may already be severely constrained, and where social and political tensions are exacerbated by the refugees' presence, a political push for the repatriation of refugees has often evolved' (Jacobsen 1999:5)

Given the problems for host governments, donors and refugees associated with protracted refugee situations – by definition, a situation where resolution through durable solutions is not currently foreseeable – (UNHCR, 2004), a number of policy processes emerged in recent years attempting to revive local integration as a durable solution and promote its utilization alongside the other two solutions of repatriation and resettlement.



3.2 Local integration and policy

In 2002, UNHCR launched the Global Consultations on International Protection. UNHCR stated that the aim of the Global Consultations was 'to make the international response more reliable and effective, as well as to ensure greater equity in the sharing of responsibilities and burdens' (UNHCR 2003:3). In light of the challenges posed to the international refugee protection regime, the Global Consultations focused on durable solutions including local integration. A Global Consultations discussion paper stated that 'a comprehensive durable solutions strategy is required for refugee problems to be effectively addressed and resolved, involving a revitalized approach to local integration and the promotion of self-reliance' (UNHCR, 2002:1). This revitalized focus on local integration is proposed by UNHCR for four main reasons:

- a significant proportion of the world's refugees is unable to repatriate safely due to ongoing conflict, and 'confining refugees to camps for years on end, deprived of the right to freedom of movement and without access to educational and income-generating opportunities, has many negative consequences';
- there are cases where local integration has a good potential to succeed, where 'refugees share a language, a culture or an ethnic origin with the host community';
- some refugees will be unable or unwilling to return to their countries of origin, due to the links they have made within their host countries or because of ongoing protection concerns in their country of origin; and
- refugees are capable of settling peacefully and productively in the countries where they have found asylum (UNHCR 2002:4-5).

The Agenda for Protection (AfP) emerged from these Global Consultations and was endorsed in 2002. The AfP emphasized that '[o]ne of the core components of international protection is finding durable solutions for refugees' (UNHCR 2003b:15), and promoted local integration as one of these durable solutions. Specifically, Goal 5 of the AfP refers to 'redoubling the search for durable solutions,' whereby one aspect is 'local integration having its proper place as part of a comprehensive strategy for durable solutions' (UNHCR 2003b:78). Goal 5, Objective 4 states that the UNHCR Executive Committee (ExCom) should 'set out framework considerations for implementing the solution of local integration, in the form of a Conclusion sensitive to the specificities of refugee needs, international and national legal standards, as well as the socioeconomic realities of hosting countries'. It emphasizes the need for 'States to examine where, when and how to promote the grant of a secure legal status and residence rights, which could include the opportunity to become naturalized citizens of the country of asylum, for refugees who have already attained a considerable degree of socio-economic integration (UNHCR 2003b:78). In summary, the Global Consultations and the subsequent Agenda for Protection framed local integration as a durable solution able to address the specific challenges of protracted refugee situations, and speak to the reality of the global refugee problem. In seeking to promote refugee protection and international cooperation to address global refugee issues, these policy processes attempted to refocus attention on local integration.

The third goal of the AfP – that of 'sharing burdens and responsibilities more equitably and building capacities to receive and protect refugees' – was transformed into Convention Plus (CP) and launched in 2002 by the then UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ruud Lubbers. CP focused on three strands of concern: the strategic

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use of resettlement; addressing irregular secondary movement; and targeting development assistance (TDA) to achieve durable solutions (UNHCR, 2004e). Betts states that CP's 'emphasis on durable solutions is an attempt to focus on the core elements of resettlement, local integration and return that have been present throughout UNHCR's mandate' and that the focus on TDA is an attempt to 'facilitate local integration and repatriation by incorporating refugees in national development plans' (Betts 2004:1). The Framework for Durable Solutions (in aiming to support Goals 3 and 5 of the AfP as outlined above) proposed the initiative of Development through Local Integration (DLI), where '[i]n situations where the State opts to provide opportunities for gradual integration of refugees, DLI would solicit additional development assistance with the aim of attaining a durable solution in terms of local integration of refugees as an option and not an obligation' (UNHCR, 2003:5).

DLI has been used in Serbia and Montenegro, but the prime example of DLI is the Zambia Initiative. UNHCR states that the Zambia Initiative 'is aimed at addressing the problems of poverty in refugee hosting regions and creating conditions conducive for the refugees to become productive members of their host communities, leading to their social integration, and peace, security and stability in the region' (UNHCR 2002:a). The initiative focused primarily on leveraging new development resources for areas with refugee populations. The Framework for Durable Solutions emphasizes that DLI is for 'protracted refugee situations where the State opts to provide opportunities for the gradual integration of refugees. By soliciting additional development funds for durable solutions through local integration, better quality of life and self-reliance for refugees would be achieved along with improvements in the quality of life for host communities' (UNHCR 2003:24). The Framework for Durable Solutions emphasizes the social, economic and legal components of local integration as a durable solution, and states that DLI must include developing legal and institutional frameworks that 'foster local integration including productive activities and protecting relevant civil, social and economic rights related, for example, to land, employment, access to services, freedom of movement, identity documents, and access to the judicial system' (UNHCR 2003:26). It is unclear the extent to which the Zambia Initiative has achieved this, and the extent to which it has relied more strongly on *de facto* local integration. DLI has not been widely accepted by host governments, which often view this initiative as a further attempt by Northern states to shift the burden of hosting refugees onto regions of origin (see discussion in Betts, 2004).

Finally, local integration has been promoted at a policy level through the UNHCR ExCom process, whereby this committee passed a Conclusion on Local Integration in 2005. The discussion paper leading up to this Conclusion emphasized the role of local integration in relation to self-reliance, although the focus on self-reliance was later dropped from the final Conclusion. The discussion paper frames local integration as 'a complex and gradual process with various distinct but interrelated dimensions.' It argues that '[i]t is not a homogeneous process, even among individuals with similar backgrounds. The background of the refugee population, the receptivity of the host community, the financial capacity of the host country and the political will of the government to provide the legal and institutional basis for local integration all influence how and how quickly refugees are able to become fully integrated' (UNHCR 2005:6). This Conclusion emphasizes the role of local integration alongside the other durable solutions, and in particular in cases where:

- 'refugees born in asylum countries who might otherwise become stateless; and/or



- refugees who, due to their personal circumstances including the reasons prompting their flight, are unlikely to be able to repatriate to their country of origin in the foreseeable future; and/or
- refugees who have established close family, social, cultural and economic links with their country of asylum, including those who already have, or have the capacity to attain, a considerable degree of socio-economic integration' (UNHCR, 2005).

The ExCom Conclusion discusses the economic, social and legal dimensions of local integration, and also notes 'the particular importance of the legal dimension of integration, which entails the host State granting refugees a secure legal status and a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements that are broadly commensurate with those enjoyed by its citizens' (UNHCR, 2005).

Notable in the policy processes discussed above – more specifically Convention Plus, the Agenda for Protection, the Framework for Durable Solutions, Development through Local Integration and the Executive Committee Conclusion on Local Integration – is that they have been largely confined to the policy level, primarily in Geneva. There does not yet appear to have been a strong translation to field-level processes or host government policies. Therefore, the next sections focus on potential constraints in attempting to promote or implement local integration, and then outlines briefly some cases of successful local integration, and the specific dimensions of those examples.

3.3 Constraints on local integration

The policy processes described above highlight the utility of approaching protracted refugee situations with the tool of local integration as a durable solution, at least for some refugee populations. Some literature, often critical of asylum host government policies, has emphasized the need to recognize the constraints on achieving local integration within certain policy frameworks and local contexts. UNHCR notes that 'opportunities for local integration in countries of asylum are limited. Some asylum countries are not signatories to universal or regional instruments concerning refugees and/or do not apply practices akin to the rights enumerated under the 1951 Convention' (UNHCR 2004a:10). Many of the constraints relate to restrictions on refugees' rights that impede livelihood options or interaction with local communities. This section focuses on *policies* and *practices* that impede local integration, rather than other factors – for example, ethnic or linguistic similarity – which are not the direct result of a specific policy to integrate or not integrate refugees in a certain area.

Jacobsen has argued that there are three main obstacles to local integration:

- 'The real and perceived security threats that accompany refugees prompt government authorities to keep refugees in camps where they can be monitored;
- Economic and environmental resource burdens (perceived or actual) lead to resentment by locals, resistance to integration and pressure on authorities to segregate refugees;
- The attitudes and beliefs of both refugees and locals about the continued presence of the refugees in the refugee hosting area' (Jacobsen 2001:22)



The issues of perceived security threats of refugees and their impact on local resources can influence host governments in choosing to place refugees in settlements or camps. Host governments and local populations may perceive refugee populations to be a security threat, and therefore attempt to secure the area through restricting refugees' movements or requiring refugees to live in certain contained areas. On the issue of resources, Kibreab emphasized that 'the severity of the economic crises and the environmental degradation facing many of the major African refugee hosting countries means that the most realistic option is to place refugees in designated areas where their needs can be met by assistance from the international community' (1989:473). Kibreab discusses local settlement and camps, as mandated by host governments, as such:

'Local settlement as practiced in Africa means placement of refugees in spatially segregated sites where their material needs (except land contributed by host countries) are met by the international refugee support systems. The goals of local integration (integration into first countries of arrival) and local settlement are often incompatible. If the former the objective is to create a conducive atmosphere which could pave the way to integration (permanent solution), while in the latter case the objective is to segregate so that refugees do not become members of the host society' (Kibreab 1989:470).

In fact, as detailed in the work of the Refugee Law Project on the settlement system in Uganda, the settlements and restrictions placed on refugees in settlements by host governments can lead to economic, political and social isolation, rather than integration. One major issue highlighted by Hovil (2002) is that of freedom of movement for refugees may be restricted. In Uganda refugees are required to apply for official permission from the Government refugee representative in the district. As a consequence, refugees may be unable to travel to markets easily, visit relatives in other locations and investigate if there might be alternative places to try to live (2002:12). While this restriction is more heavily enforced in some areas than others, and in some districts refugees are quite free to move around without a permit, this restriction does impact refugees' interactions with the local community and links to broader markets and areas in Uganda. Settlements and camps and the related issues created by the structures and policies associated with these systems have been identified as major obstacles to local integration of refugees in refugee-hosting areas.

In Uganda, the settlement system creates issues of economic marginalization and segregation, acting as a significant obstacle to economic integration. Werker examined these issues in the context of the Kyangwali refugee settlement in Uganda, finding that refugee camps which exist in order to manage and protect refugees 'can have very distorting effects on the ability of refugees to meet their basic economic needs in ways that are not well understood by refugee practitioners' (Werker 2002:3). These effects included restrictions on freedom of movement thereby limiting engagement in markets outside of the settlement; limitations on rights to employment thereby excluding refugees from external labour markets and confinement to the settlement which also restricts level of involvement in economic activities due to high transportation costs and limited access to information about trade and prices. When studying Ethiopian refugees in Sudan in the 1980s, Bulcha (1988) found that settlements did not facilitate economic self-sufficiency, but rather self-settled



refugees had a greater chance of economic self-reliance and integration with the local community than refugees in settlements.

The impact of settlements and camps on integration can also be found in the social and political sphere. On a social level, parallel services are often established by UNHCR or implementing partner NGOs, which limit the interaction of local community members and refugees in schools or health centres. Bulcha's research on this issue found striking results regarding the lack of social integration of refugees in settlements. He argues that while social integration 'cannot be wholly determined by government decrees since much of its success depends on socio-cultural compatibility between the in-migrating and indigenous communities,' it can be facilitated and strengthened by 'sound policies regulating the pattern of settlement, housing, information to combat prejudices, provision of language training services, the integration of refugee children and youth in the educational institutions of the host country and so on (Bulcha 1988:175). Yet, this was not the case for Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan, and Bulcha found that only 4 percent of respondents in organized settlements had informal personal relations with the local Sudanese population, as compared with 49 percent in the self-settled refugee communities. This demonstrates the 'negative effect of spatial segregation on social interaction and integration' (Bulcha 1988:178). Problems of limitations on political involvement for refugees in settlements in Uganda have been outlined in the author's own research (Meyer, 2006). Werker (2002:12) has also emphasized that restrictions on political freedom limited the ability of refugees to change their environment to facilitate greater economic integration. Bulcha also concluded that '[t]he exclusion of refugees from the decision-making processes that concern their lives constitutes a severe constraint on their integration in the country of asylum' (Bulcha 1988:234).

These issues are summarized well by Hovil in the context of Uganda, who examines the 'contrast between those refugees who are living in settlements - and, therefore, within the official assistance structures - and those who have chosen to be self-settled.' This research shows that '[t]he former are shown to be restricted in their movement, heavily reliant on the refugee assistance structures, and to lack the empowerment necessary to be able to improve their situation [however] self-settled refugees...move freely within the district, travel to and from Sudan, and show creativity in the way in which they confront their current circumstances' (Hovil 2002:1).

This discussion has focused on the settlement system in Uganda and Bulcha's research on Ethiopians in Sudan, but the issues of economic, political and social isolation or marginalization created by host government policies that require settlements or camps for refugees has been well documented in other contexts (See [FMO Research Guide on Camps Versus Settlements](#)). The central obstacle to local integration of refugees, as created through policy decisions by host governments, and often in co-operation with UNHCR, is the settlement or camp system. The degree to which the actual policies restrict economic, social and political integration of refugees will vary in different contexts, and in many cases refugees will avoid these formal structures and self-settle instead, with higher levels of integration exhibited. In addition, a UNHCR report on the potential for local integration for Congolese refugees in Gabon (UNHCR, 2004d) shows the multitude of obstacles present in a case that could potentially lend itself to local integration, including lack of government capacity, inadequate donor support, lack of collaboration between refugees and host communities, a weak market for agricultural products, and an



already over-saturated job market. This report demonstrates the importance of the potential for economic integration in making local integration a consideration for the refugee-hosting country's government, even in a case where refugees were self-settled and not put in local settlements or camps.

3.4 Examples of local integration

Despite the obstacles outlined above, there are some documented cases of local integration. Crisp explains that local integration as an official policy may be more feasible in cases when:

- refugees have moved into an area which is populated by people of the same ethnic origin;
- refugees have moved into an area where there is a surplus of agricultural land or where other economic opportunities exist;
- refugees have been able to establish sustainable livelihoods but where their legal status and residence rights remain unresolved; and,
- a 'residual caseload' of refugees has established strong social and economic links to their country of asylum (Crisp 2003:25-26).

Harrell-Bond (2002) highlighted the case of Liberians in Ivory Coast, where the government opposed settlement of refugees in camps and allowed them to settle freely among the local population, while Guinea also had a similar policy to a degree. Ferris (1996:12) also points to the case of 5,000 Mozambicans who stayed in Malawi after a million Mozambicans had repatriated, mainly those who had married Malawians or had other family ties in the country. After repatriation from many large refugee situations, there are often smaller groups of refugees who remain behind in their host country of asylum, for reasons connected to family or livelihood networks, or because they cannot return for a range of possible reasons. UNHCR has been effective in many cases in negotiating the possibility of local integration for those groups.

However, there are limited examples of broader official policies of local integration. One such official policy is that of Mexico, where Guatemalan refugees were offered the option of local integration. This case is detailed by Kauffer Michel (2002), who looks at the case of Guatemalan refugees who chose to take up the Mexican government's offer of permanent stay in Mexico after a decade and a half as refugees. In practice, this policy emphasized the legal aspect of integration. But Kauffer Michel also found other indicators and levels of integration, such as social and economic relationships (Kauffer Michel 2002:366). She emphasizes the importance legal integration also played in such a situation, whereby it facilitated greater economic integration. This is because, as refugees, Guatemalans in Mexico had to resort to the underground economy; whereas once legally integrated, they were able to formally participate in the economy. This demonstrates that 'the chance to become a legally recognized member of the receiving society has real consequences in different areas of everyday life' (Kauffer Michel 2002:369). She also found in this case that local settlements actually facilitated integration, in that they gave 'refugees security through permanent housing, arable land, better social services and infrastructure' and helped sensitize the local population to the refugees' presence (2002:370). The Mexican Government offered local integration as an option to refugees, as well as the other two durable solutions - that of repatriation and resettlement. Kauffer Michel argues that local factors at the time were favourable to local integration, including the desire to improve Mexico's international image and the



limitations on what was achievable from the process of return to Guatemala. The granting of permanent residence visas to the refugees allowed for free movement, place of residence and access to the labour market. Kauffer Michel's study emphasizes the role of local refugee leaders in facilitating the integration process. Kauffer Michel's exploration identifies some of the reasons why some refugees favoured integration above return to Guatemala, including economic opportunities, stability in Mexico and the roots established by their children in Mexico. This seems to indicate that 'social and cultural transformations in Mexico, and refugees' economic well-being in the host country' were decisive factors in the process of integration (Kauffer Michel 2002:384).

In a 2004 review of Development through Local Integration in Serbia, UNHCR found that the Government of Serbia had shown 'to assess the condition of refugees and to promote solutions for their repatriation or local integration' (UNHCR 2004b:iv), including access to services, employment and income generating activities and housing assistance. Comparing the activities in Serbia to the DLI Framework, the report found that government and local authorities were in support of refugees having access to income generating activities, as well as education and health services. As a result, there had been considerable success in integrating refugees into the development agenda and planning for the country. Refugees are able to become citizens in Serbian law. There is freedom of movement for refugees, access to education, the labour market, health services, some access to public assistance and freedom of movement.

3.5 'De facto' integration and self-settled refugees

The central example of successful local integration is self-settled refugees. As Jacobsen argues, 'many self-settled refugees become unofficially integrated after they have lived in and been accepted by the community, and have attained self-sufficiency. We might think of this as de facto integration, where the lived, everyday experience of refugees is that of being part of the local community' (Jacobsen 2001:9). This process is outside of the scope of local integration as a durable solution, as it is usually the case that self-settled refugees are defying host government or UNHCR directives to register and live in designated areas. As Hovil found in Uganda, the legal status of self-settled refugees is highly ambiguous: Ugandan government policy does not recognize them as refugees since they do not live in settlements (Hovil 2002:6). Nevertheless, self-settled refugees are often socially, economically and culturally integrated, whilst often lacking political integration into local district systems. Research in Uganda found that refugees had positive relationships with their hosts in the Ugandan town of Koboko (Okello et. al 2005). This was attributed to their hosts' previous experience as refugees, as well as ethnic similarities, which contributed to communal cohesion. Van Damme (1999:37) found that in the case of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Guinea, '[m]any self-settled in the border areas, developed their own coping mechanisms, and became partly self-sufficient, but to varying degrees, depending mainly on the density of refugees and the degree of integration with the host population. Only about 20 percent of refugees went to designated camps. Van Damme's study shows that refugee and host community-driven hosting practices led to integration, whereby 'no outside actor, be it the Guinean government or foreign agencies, influenced this process (Van Damme 1999:38). Factors influencing settlement patterns, and therefore integration levels, in this case included:



- kinship between the refugees and the host population, itself ethnically diverse;
- time of arrival and duration of stay of the refugees in Guinea;
- degree of laissez-faire or steering of the situation by UNHCR, and thus the degree of freedom the refugees had to self-settle;
- concentration of refugees and speed of arrival;
- pattern of land use and possibilities of access to land for the refugees;
- intensity of social and economic relations between the refugees and the host population (Van Damme 1999:50-51).

There are significant gaps in research on self-settled refugees, for the reasons outlined in Section 2.2, relating to difficulties in identifying and sampling self-settled refugee communities. Freund and Kalumba (1986:300) emphasize that in the case they examined in Zambia, there is a lack of data on self-settled rural refugees due to factors including a tendency to maintain a low profile, political impotency, and typically being settled in remote, difficult-to-reach areas. Despite this, the phenomenon of self-settled refugees is a central one to the study of local integration: understanding the processes and practices involved can shed light on local obstacles and opportunities for refugee communities to integrate.

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