Certification counts

Recognizing the learning attainments of displaced and refugee students

Edited by Jackie Kirk

Education in emergencies and reconstruction

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UNESCO

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Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

iiep

International Institute
for Educational Planning

Acknowledgements

This study is dedicated to the many refugee and displaced students and teachers committed to teaching and learning even under the most challenging conditions. Certification matters and it should be assured as an aspect of the right to Education for All. In reality this does not always happen; many barriers exist to obtaining a recognised proof of learning achievements.

This study was conceived and developed as part of the research partnership between the International Institute for Educational Planning of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IIEP-UNESCO), the Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands funded the study, supported the students' field work and provided significant technical input. The focus on the topic of certification is, however, very much the product of the enthusiasm and commitment of Christopher Talbot, who was at the time Programme Specialist in Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction at IIEP-UNESCO. He has been concerned for many years about the lack of attention to the certification of learning for refugee students.

The IRC supported field offices in Bujumbura and Makamba (IRC Burundi), Freetown (IRC Sierra Leone), Monrovia (IRC Liberia), Kasulu and Kibondo (IRC Tanzania), Nairobi (IRC Kenya), Islamabad and Peshawar (IRC Pakistan) and Bangkok (IRC Thailand). IRC provided invaluable logistic and administrative support during field visits and served as a 'home from home'. Staff in all these locations offered technical insights, information, contacts and introductions for interviews and visits, especially David Walker (now IRC Liberia) and Jumma Khan Khajjik (IRC Pakistan). My colleagues within the IRC Child Youth Protection and Development technical unit, especially Jennifer Sklar and Rebecca Winthrop, provided support and encouragement for the study, sharing their insights into various countries' situations.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staff in headquarters and several field offices have also been supportive of and involved in the study. Eva Ahlen in particular has been a source of information and contacts. Staff in the Accra office were generous hosts

Foreword to the series

UNESCO is increasingly requested to provide an educational response in emergency and reconstruction settings. The organization is in the process of developing expertise in this field in order to be able to provide prompt and relevant assistance. It will offer guidance, practical tools, and specific training for education policy-makers, officials and planners.

The fifth of the eleven objectives adopted by the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 explicitly focuses on the rights of children in emergencies. It stresses the importance of meeting "the needs of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability and conduct[ing] educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and that help to prevent violence and conflict". The *Dakar Framework for Action* (World Education Forum, 2000: 9) calls for national Education for All plans to include provision for education in emergency situations. Governments, particularly education ministries, have an important role to play in an area that has often been dominated by the actions of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and United Nations (UN) agencies.

Moreover, the field of educational planning in emergencies and reconstruction is still young. It must be organized into a manageable discipline, through further documentation and analysis, while training programmes are being designed. Accumulated institutional memories and knowledge in governments, agencies and NGOs on education in emergencies are in danger of being lost due both to the dispersion and disappearance of documents and to high staff turnover in both national and international contexts. Most of the expertise is still in the heads of practitioners and needs to be collected, since memories fade fast. Diverse experiences of educational reconstruction must be more thoroughly documented and analysed before they disappear.

This task includes the publication in this series of country-specific analyses being conducted on the planning and management of education in emergencies and reconstruction. They concern the efforts currently being made to restore and transform education systems in countries and territories as diverse as Pakistan, Burundi, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Sudan, Kosovo, Timor-Leste and Rwanda. They have been

initiated and sponsored by IIEP, in close collaboration with colleagues in other UNESCO offices.

The objectives of the case studies are:

*   to contribute to the process of developing knowledge in the discipline of education in emergencies and reconstruction;
*   to provide focused input for IIEP training programmes targeting government officials and others in education in emergencies and reconstruction;
*   to identify and collect documentation on the management of education in various countries;
*   to capture some of the undocumented memories of practitioners;
*   to analyse the responses in very different situations to educational provision in times of crisis;
*   and to increase dissemination of information and analysis on education in emergencies and reconstruction.

IIEP's larger programme on education in emergencies and reconstruction involves not only these case studies, but also a series of global, thematic, policy-related studies. In addition, IIEP has published a *Guidebook for planning education in emergencies and reconstruction* for ministry of education officials and the agencies assisting them, and is developing training materials for a similar audience. Through this programme, IIEP will make a modest but significant contribution to the discipline of education in emergencies and reconstruction. Its hope is to enrich the quality of the planning processes applied in this crucial field.

Mark Bray
Director, IIEP

In Memoriam

While doing the work to which she had committed her extraordinary mind, energy and heart, the author of this publication, Dr. Jackie Kirk, was killed in ambush in Afghanistan on 13 August 2008, along with three other International Rescue Committee colleagues. *Certification counts* is a testament to the value and depth of Jackie's engagement and insight. To date, very little research has been done on the critical issue of certification of learning attainments for displaced populations. This topic was of great importance and interest to Jackie, and her groundbreaking work will advance efforts on the issue.

Jackie's unflagging passion and advocacy for quality education in emergencies and reconstruction moved and inspired all those who shared the privilege of working with her. In addition to authoring this book and a recent IIEP publication entitled *Building back better: post-earthquake responses and educational challenges in Pakistan*, Jackie was actively involved with our team working on capacity building in contexts of fragility. She also worked closely with UNESCO colleagues, both at Headquarters and in the field. Jackie was a gifted and prolific researcher and scholar, with a deep grounding in field operational realities in the most difficult of environments. She was especially committed to promoting the right to quality education for women and girls in conflict and disaster settings and to increasing understanding of the gender dynamics of education. She worked tirelessly within the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), collaborating with colleagues all over the world.

Jackie's death is an unspeakable loss to all of us, to the field of education and to the communities who will continue to benefit from her tremendous intellectual and personal contributions. She was a treasured friend and colleague and she will be sorely missed. We will honour Jackie's memory by continuing our commitment to advancing the cause to which she devoted herself so thoroughly: the provision of education for children and communities affected by conflict and disaster.

Mark Bray
Director
International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) of UNESCO
On behalf of colleagues at IIEP and throughout UNESCO

Contents

List of abbreviations

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency International
ARRA	Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
BEFARe	Basic Education for Afghan Refugees
BMWEC	Burma Migrant Working Education Committee
BPRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States
CAR	Central African Republic
CCSDPT	Committee for Co-ordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration
EPSR	Education Programme for Sudanese Refugees
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GED	General Educational Development
GES	Ghana Education Services
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEB	Inter-regional Examinations Board (Tanzania)
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO-IIEP)
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IUA	International University of Africa, Khartoum
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
KED	Karen Education Department
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KSCE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KnED	Karenni Educational Department
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHEC	National Health and Education Committee (Myanmar)
PEER	Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction (UNESCO)
PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RET	Refugee Education Trust
RoC	Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville)
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SEDL	Secondary Education through Distance Learning (RET programme)
TBBC	Thailand Burmese Border Consortium
TCRS	Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service
TENAFEP	Democratic Republic of the Congo's secondary schools entrance examination
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WAEC	West African Examinations Council
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examination
ZOA	ZOA Refugee Care – a Netherlands-based NGO

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About the authors

Barry Sesnan is a consultant in education in difficult circumstances, founder of Echo Bravo and co-founder of the Education Programme for Sudanese Refugees. His work is based on 32 years of experience in education for refugee and displaced students in Sudan, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa. He has worked in conflict and post-conflict situations in both conventional and alternative education. He is a specialist in emergency training of teachers and support to education through educational resource centres. He has worked extensively with youth programmes through peer education, clubs and FM radio in the fields of life skills, vocational training and HIV/AIDS. He has worked for UN agencies and NGOs and has written several education manuals and books. He is currently working with the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Olloriak Sawade has worked in Central America, West Africa and South East Asia. She recently completed a Masters of Science in the field of International Development. Her dissertation focused on educational certification for refugees from Myanmar living in Thailand, using observation and semi-formal interviews to gather data. Students, teachers and school administrative personnel were interviewed in four refugee camps and various migrant communities. She also conducted interviews with personnel from the Thai Ministry of Education, UNICEF, UNHCR, international NGOs and local community-based organizations.

Marc van der Stouwe worked as programme manager and adviser for an education and training programme for Burmese refugees in Thailand, implemented by ZOA Refugee Care, a Netherlands-based NGO. Prior to his work in Thailand, Marc worked as a development consultant providing technical and managerial inputs in social and education sector projects world-wide. He is now employed as an education adviser by BMB Mott MacDonald in the Netherlands, where he leads a UK Department for International Development-funded education programme in Bangladesh.

Su-Ann Oh is a sociologist specializing in refugee education who has been working as a research consultant to NGOs (including ZOA) along the Thai-Burmese border since 2005. Her work along the border has examined a range of educational and social issues, including formal

schooling, social inclusion, adult learning, teacher training and separated children in refugee camps.

Erick Gerstner was a Masters student in International Development Studies at the time of writing, at the International School for Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Amsterdam. He has worked with education-related projects for Swedish NGOs, most notably a project involving the education of rural women in Madhya Pradesh, India.

Magali Chelpi-den Hamer is a research fellow at the Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies, University of Amsterdam. She works on issues related to youth, conflict, processes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 1999 and 2004, she worked as programme co-ordinator for several INGOs in Colombia, Honduras, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire.

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Pakistan and Afghanistan: The IRC first started to provide emergency medical relief to refugees in Pakistan fleeing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. Since 1981, it has provided assistance for refugees in Pakistan through health, education, water and sanitation programmes. By 1985, it was supporting programmes in pre-school and secondary education, English language, curriculum and materials development for secondary students and teachers, teacher training and computer and health education. The IRC was able to support some communities inside Afghanistan during the Taliban regime, but with the fall of the Taliban in 2001 and the installation of a new government, its Afghanistan education programmes expanded. When four IRC colleagues (including the editor of this book) were killed in an ambush in August 2008, while undertaking an evaluation visit in Afghanistan, all IRC operations were suspended. At the time of publishing, the IRC had just announced the decision to gradually restart selected programme activities after a rigorous security review. In Pakistan, the IRC continues to support country of origin education, in Dari and Pashto languages, which is officially recognized by the Afghan Ministry of Education.

Chechnya and Ingushetia: The IRC began assistance programmes in Chechnya during the First Chechen War, from 1994 to 1996. In December 1999, it restarted operations in the Northern Caucasus to respond to

the needs of the thousands of IDPs in a new crisis. Its programmes in Ingushetia focus on under-served spontaneous settlements, while in Chechnya it carries out relief operations, mainly in the capital Grozny. The IRC developed a comprehensive programme that addresses many of the needs of the war-affected Chechen populations in both republics, including programming in education, psychosocial and community support, public health, water and sanitation, and shelter.

Guinea: The IRC has been supporting education for refugees in Guinea since 1990, when the first waves of refugees arrived from Liberia and began setting up informal schools. They were subsequently joined by refugees from Sierra Leone. Enrolments in the IRC education programme grew from 12,000 in 1990 to 81,000 at the peak in 1999. By 2007, after 17 years of operation, hundreds of thousands of students, teachers and administrators had accessed educational opportunities, from primary education to adult literacy classes, vocational scholarships and local integration classes. The IRC has also provided professional training and development opportunities for teachers, classroom assistants, head teachers and education managers. One of the key successes was the securing of accreditation and certification, first for Liberian and Sierra Leonean students and later for teachers.

The Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville): The IRC started to work in Bétou, Congo-Brazzaville, in late 2000, to serve the needs of the conflict-affected population, both refugees from DRC and local Bétou residents. It provided services in five sectors: health, education, water and sanitation, gender-based violence and community services. The programme closed in 2005, with the inevitable dispersal of personnel to other programmes, organizations and locations. Although project reports and formal documentation of the programme exist in IRC archives, the case study documented in this book, of a specific technical issue, is a significant contribution to organizational learning as well as inter-agency research and knowledge sharing for future policy and programming development.

Executive summary

The certification of the learning attainments of refugee and internally displaced pupils is critical because of its benefits to individuals, families, communities and societies in or recovering from crisis. Yet while many actors in the field have extensive experience of working to achieve certification solutions, very little formal research or documentation is available on the topic. This book presents a comprehensive conceptual, policy and programming framework, complemented by case studies. It is global in perspective, examining the challenges and solutions to the problems faced by refugee and IDP students with either no documentation or inadequate or unrecognized documentation of their learning. It proposes policy and programming guidance for current and future situations.

Ideally, refugee and IDP children should have uninterrupted access to education and opportunities for cognitive, social, emotional and economic protection and development. However, at each point in trajectories of forced migration there may be obstacles to learning and access to opportunities: school enrolment in the location of displacement, the provision of formal records and examination certificates in an education programme outside the jurisdiction of a ministry of education (MoE), reintegration into school or entry to the job market upon return or access to learning and job opportunities through local integration.

The study shows that teachers, MoE officials, UN agency staff and NGO representatives all have specific strengths and opportunities which, when co-ordinated, can help to overcome obstacles to effective recognition, assessment, certification and validation of learning. These include political resistance, technical capacity, weak or adverse policy frameworks and resource gaps. Increased attention to certification and its importance to students, teachers, parents and education authorities is required of all key actors. The securing of formal recognition of learning achievement and the identification of certification possibilities should be considered from the start of any emergency response; yet this is not only an 'emergency' issue. Certification of learning also requires attention in protracted or chronic crisis situations and times of pre-return and reintegration, yet at these times donor funding for education often dips.

Refugee and displaced children and young people are often denied education and the opportunities for a sense of identity, belonging and

the other services and resources of the state which appropriate education can provide. They are especially aware of the limitations of education systems and certification processes which have no value beyond the national borders and which operate in isolation from education systems and certification processes elsewhere, particularly neighbouring and nearby countries. In the longer term, donor support for education should encourage national curriculum, assessment, certification and validation process development within regional and international frameworks which support cross-border equivalency, inter-operability, and mutual recognition and validation.

Identification of the strengths and limitations of the specific actors and of the partnerships they may create shapes a set of broad recommendations related to advocacy and co-ordination, strategies and implementation, and capacity building.

Advocacy and co-ordination

Advocacy activities need to be co-ordinated in collaboration with government departments to counterbalance political interests and other barriers to the right to education of refugees and IDPs.

Co-ordination needs review on a regular basis, to encourage synergy and leveraging of complementary strengths, positions and relationships between the actors concerned and should be flexible enough to respond to complex, changing situations.

Implementation

The most appropriate accreditation and certification options should be determined in partnership with affected communities and be in line with INEE Minimum Standards and other relevant guidance. They need to take account of local dynamics, capacities and perspectives and funding should be made available in a timely manner to enable actors to respond to changing circumstances.

Missing or unrecognized identity cards should not prevent school entry, progression and formal evaluation. To facilitate validation, documents should be provided as soon as possible after the completion of a learning programme, and if relevant, in more than one language.

Policy

MoEs should develop clear policy guidance for the equivalency of curricula, programmes and examinations, where displaced students

are integrating or reintegrating into education systems. Such policy **guidance and procedures should be implemented down to local levels** to eliminate potentially exploitative, ad hoc decision-making by individual schools and authorities.

Regional and cross-border policies and mechanisms, such as examination and syllabus boards and conventions, should be elaborated to ensure a level of coherence and consistency for refugee and IDP populations on the move.

Refugee and IDP teachers and education experts should also be included in policy development related to accreditation and certification and have opportunities to use existing experience and capacity and develop their own policy materials.

Capacity building

Technical and capacity building support should be provided as needed to MoEs supporting IDP and refugee children, in order to facilitate planning and long- and short-term policy development.

Tools and instruments such as 'certification supports,' grade conversion charts, syllabus comparisons, etc. are needed to ensure the smooth transition of students from and into different education.

Foreword by donor

Throughout the world, people continue to suffer under political instability, endemic violence and forced migration. Women and children – who form the majority of displaced people – feel the far-reaching effects on their safety, health, nutrition and education. Millions of children have experienced the violent disruption of families and community structures.

Yet crisis can also be a breeding ground for social change. And education, although often severely affected itself, is an important agent of change. Incorporating well-planned educational programmes into emergency relief efforts enables the long-term benefits for societies in crisis. Education has proved to be a major contributor to lasting solutions, enhancing the successful reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees.

Hence, a research partnership has been formed to develop knowledge on two specific issues:

• certification of the learning attainments of refugee and internally displaced pupils, and
• opportunities for change within the education sector in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The partnership is unique and brings together the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the University of Amsterdam's Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies (AMIDSt) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This alliance not only strengthens the partners themselves, but also reinforces the strategies used to achieve common goals for education in emergencies and post-crisis situations.

The purpose of this partnership is to contribute to the Education for All goals through research on education in emergency situations, aiming at the development of knowledge on specific interventions, strategies and methodologies that can be used to improve access to quality education for all. This dovetails perfectly with the IS Academy on Quality Education, a five-year joint initiative between the University of Amsterdam and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This initiative seeks to improve

interaction between policy-makers, practitioners and academics working in the area of education, development and quality.

I am grateful to the above partners and in particular to Jackie Kirk, the editor of this publication, who was brutally murdered in Afghanistan just after she had finished work on it. We came to know Jackie as a very dedicated researcher and adviser in gender-related issues of education in crisis and post-crisis situations.

This publication *Certification counts: recognizing the learning attainments of displaced and refugee students* reflects the importance of accreditation, validation and certification of education, especially for displaced persons and refugees. The recognition of their studies through an official certificate gives students and their parents hope for the future and contributes to the well-being of individuals, families and communities. It is a powerful tool for the future – a brighter future!

Bert Koenders,
Minister for Development Cooperation of the Kingdom
of the Netherlands

Section I
Setting the context

Chapter 1

Introducing the project and the publication

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the publication. It describes the unique research partnership between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the University of Amsterdam, the International Institute for Educational Planning of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IIEP-UNESCO) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). It explains the relation of this study to the research framework developed by Christopher Talbot in conjunction with these partners, documents the research process and describes the scope of the study and the structure of its presentation here. It also spells out some of the key contextual factors and terminology related to the topic of certification for refugee and internally displaced students.

1.2 Research partnership

This work is the fruit of an innovative research collaboration between IIEP-UNESCO, Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam and IRC, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The partnership's purpose is to contribute to Education for All goals through research on education in areas of conflict, emergency and reconstruction. The overall aim is to develop knowledge about interventions, strategies and methodologies which will improve access to quality education for all. The partnership recognizes that each member participates in national and international debates with its own perspective and role.

> "These roles and perspectives can strengthen and support each other, but can also differ, because of different policy objectives, perspectives and views. The partnership provides the framework in which the complementarity of the partners and the specific added value each one has in elaborating the identified topics can be strengthened; An alliance between the different partners based on exchange of information and co-operation strengthens not only the partners but also reinforces the strategies which are used to reach the common established goals" (Talbot, 2006: 2).

Through effective policy and programming-related research into the certification of the learning attainments of refugee and internally displaced pupils, the goal of successful integration or reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees into recognized learning programmes can be pursued. This can have long-term benefits for societies in or recovering from crisis, especially in improving access to employment.

1.3 Research process

The book is built on student researcher case studies, organizational case studies and document review, analysis and field work by the lead researcher. It has benefited greatly from feedback on initial drafts from international experts on the topic and from detailed discussions of the challenges and possible solutions to accreditation and certification during a workshop held at IIEP in January 2008.

Students involved in the Masters programme in International Development at the Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies and the International School for Humanities and Social Sciences at the Universiteit van Amsterdam were invited to participate in the project and to take certification and accreditation of refugee and displaced students' learning as a focus for their Masters theses and field work. The University and the research partners provided support for their studies in an initial meeting and set of presentations on the topic of certification as a critical policy issue for the field (September 2006) and an international conference on education and emergencies (March 2007). This was followed by a post-field work research workshop (June 2007), in which ideas were shared and refined. Methodologically, they were supported by their supervisor Mario Novelli. As lead researcher, I conducted field work for the study during 2007. I spent four weeks travelling in West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ghana) and East Africa (Kenya, Burundi and Tanzania) in April and May 2007. I was able to supplement this rich experience with visits to pertinent field sites through my work as an Education Advisor to the IRC. I spent two weeks providing technical support to IRC's work in education for Burmese refugees, migrants and IDPs in September 2007 and visited IRC Pakistan and Afghanistan programmes in 2007. During these visits I gathered more up-to-date information, interacted directly with key actors and gathered relevant documentation. In each field site I held semi-structured interviews with policy-makers and programme staff

as well as students and teachers. A basic, open-ended question format was adapted to the perspective, experience and knowledge area of each interviewee.

Data collected in these field visits were complemented by data collected through email correspondence and phone conversations with individuals who were not available to meet me or were in places I could not visit, such as Bangladesh. UNHCR staff members in a number of locations were particularly generous with their insights and information.

1.4 Scope of the study

This study of educational certification issues for refugee and displaced students is global in perspective, drawing on a range of case studies and on data from education stakeholders in different parts of the world. However, it cannot and does not pretend to present a global survey or even a fully comprehensive picture of the many different scenarios currently or formerly played out during crises of displacement. It is limited and shaped by the time available for the research and by the ability to access up-to-date information and to communicate with people who are or have been engaged in certification-related activities or processes. One issue of particular concern is the relative absence of ministry and educational authority voices in the publication. Unfortunately, while UN and international non-governmental organization (INGO) workers are relatively easy to track down, even once they have moved on from a posting, the same is not true for MoE staff; access to email is also more problematic.

Although it draws on some historical examples and cases, this volume focuses on current or recent case studies of refugee and IDP experiences. Much can be learned from full documentation of these situations and by probing the experiences and perspectives of those involved; this is far harder for more historical case studies, where key actors may have moved and information is difficult to obtain. Insights and understanding of the lessons learned from current situations and the recent past provide rich material for relevant policy and programming guidelines to be applied to current and future situations.

The study examines the challenges faced and solutions found by refugee and IDP students who have either no documentation of their learning or inadequate or unrecognized documentation. It particularly addresses the problems faced by refugee and IDP education programmes

in securing formal recognition for student learning. Although it is a related issue, this volume does not address in detail the certification of refugee and IDP teachers.

1.5 Structure of the book

The structure of the book reflects the partnership model from which it emerges. *Section I*, "Setting the context", I wrote in my capacity as the researcher and editor who had to provide conceptual guidance to the study, to do focused field work in a number of locations and to draw out overarching themes from the case studies contributed by student researchers at the University of Amsterdam and by individuals and partner organizations with extensive experience in education for refugee and displaced populations. *Section II*, "The case studies", offers perspectives and insights into certification issues in specific locations and in the work of UN and non-UN organizations. Barry Sesnan's *Chapter 7* highlights the importance of listening to students' voices and reminds the reader of the personal agency that refugee students demonstrate in the face of such challenges as lack of official documentation of their learning. *Chapter 8*, contributed by the IRC, discusses the effects of the changing political situation on certification issues for refugees from Afghanistan now studying in Pakistan. Olloriak Sawade, Marc van der Stouwe and Su-Ann Oh write on the same theme in the context of the Thai-Burmes border in *Chapters 9* and *10*. They present different aspects of a complex situation: a description from students' perspectives of the diverse but limited opportunities for learning recognized outside the camp and migrant community, and a presentation and discussion of the positions and perspectives of the actors involved in current programmes. *Chapter 11* provides an NGO perspective, with IRC's experience of working for certification of learning for IDP students from Chechnya now in Ingushetia. *Chapter 12* documents IRC's experience in West Africa, and *Chapter 13* presents perspectives, experiences and recommendations related to certification of learning for Somali students in a Kenyan refugee camp, followed in *Chapter 14* by the story of IRC's experience in the Republic of the Congo during the refugee crisis of 2001-2005. The volume closes with Magali Chelpi-den Hamer's presentation and discussion of certification, equivalence and the relevance of informal schooling for Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire (1992-2007).

1.6 Research framework, context and terminology

Figures 1.1 and *1.2*, taken from the research framework document, represent situations in which refugee and IDP children are faced with multiple challenges to quality learning and to obtaining official recognition of such learning. *Figure 1.1* suggests that there are various possible 'certification scenarios' or 'validation moments' in the experience of a refugee child, even within one level of education. Ideally, the educational pathways for refugee children should be as easy to navigate as possible, to enable them to benefit from uninterrupted opportunities for cognitive, social, emotional and economic protection and development at a time when it may be most critically important. In reality, at each transition point in a trajectory of forced migration, there may be obstacles to learning and access to opportunities.

Figure 1.1 Displacement and educational certification for refugee students
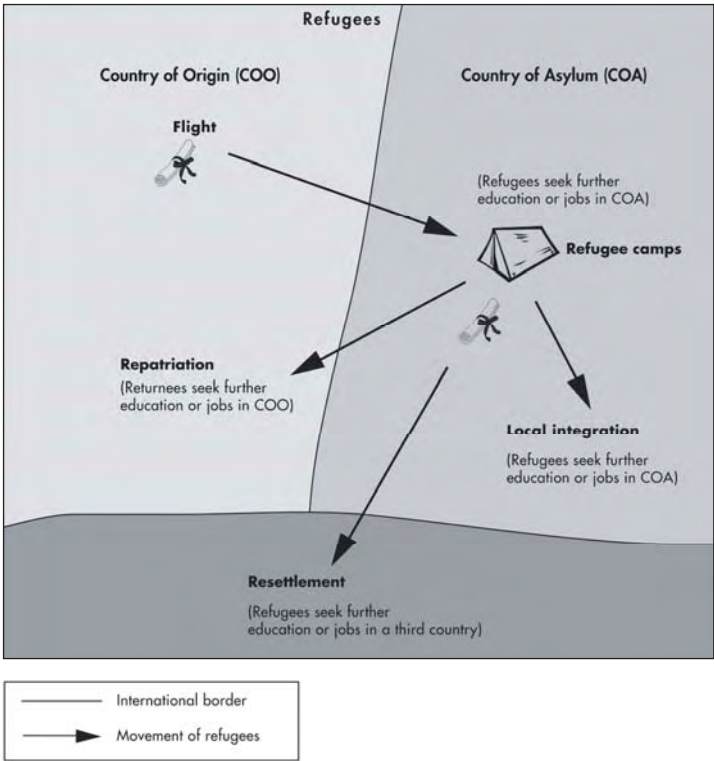
Source: Talbot, 2006.

**Figure 1.2 Displacement and educational certification
for internally displaced students**
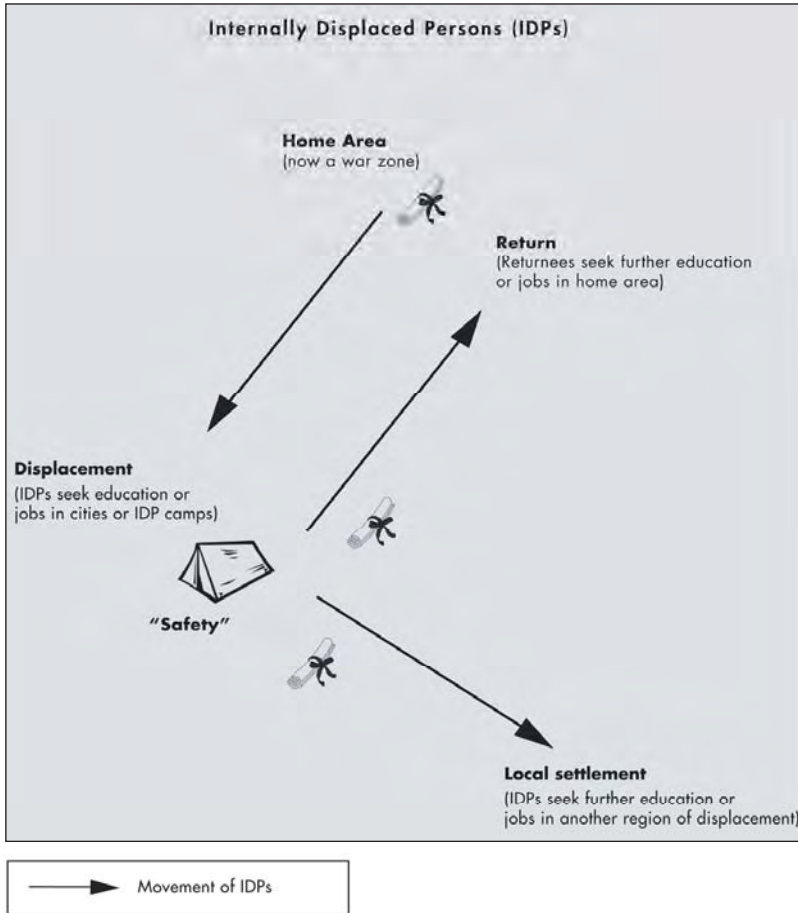
Although they do not cross international borders, IDP children may encounter these and other challenges as they are forced to move between jurisdictions. As *Chapter 2* shows, in many ways the situation for IDP children may be more complex than that of refugee children, and access to education even more difficult. Education for IDP children and youth may be at best pieced together from different components: schooling in place of origin, schooling in place of displacement (at a local community school or IDP school) and schooling in area of return or settlement. *Figure 1.2* represents this situation, although especially

in times of conflict movement from one area to another even within the same country may be far more complicated, with internal borders, different jurisdictions and possibly conflict between local or regional authorities or between them and a central authority.

For refugees and IDPs certification may be a particular concern at the end of an education cycle, whether primary, junior secondary or senior secondary school. However, other certificates also require recognition. If they are transferring mid-cycle, students may also need to present end of year examination results, report cards or other records to ensure they are enrolled in new schools at the appropriate grade level. When flight or repatriation/return occurs in the middle of an academic year, refugees, IDPs and returnees face the challenges of documenting their incomplete year and having it 'counted'.

Terminology

The initial research framework also provided a set of definitions related to the topic:

Box 1   Certification terminology

CERTIFICATION/ACCREDITATION is defined as a mark of quality that publicly attests the worth of a learning programme.

VALIDATION is the process by which the authenticity of the accreditation is ascertained.

RECOGNITION is the acceptance by an outside party of a certificate's worth and validation.

Source: Talbot, 2006.

Each of these terms can be illustrated with examples of the experience of displaced students. Certification, for example, might be the provision of a formal certificate recognizing a student's achievement in end of cycle examinations. Accreditation, although very similar to certification, is not entirely synonymous; accreditation accords a programme official recognition or endorsement – most likely, recognition or endorsement by a ministry of education. Accreditation applies more to the status of a learning programme, whereas certification usually means the provision of proof of successful completion by a learner.

Validation of certificates and other documentation may take place at different moments, including entry into a new school at a different

level (for example, transfer from primary to secondary) or in a new jurisdiction, such as when a displaced student is seeking entry to host community institutions or is returning to the place of origin with 'foreign' certificates, issued by a different authority. A validation process may be a cursory check that the document is not a fake, or it may be a more complicated process of comparing syllabi and equivalences to ensure a match with official requirements.

Recognition of a certificate or document is the desired result of a validation process. Like a passport, the recognized certificate should permit access to further opportunities such as continued schooling, higher education or employment.

Although the primary focus of this study is formal schooling provided by state institutions and by other agencies such as NGOs or UN agencies, a range of other learning programmes may be provided for refugee and IDP students which may require accreditation, certification, validation and recognition. These include vocational and technical training, 'accelerated learning', bridging or catch-up programmes and community-based informal learning programmes, catering for special groups such as out-of-school youth, girls, former child soldiers or persons with disabilities. Life skills, including human rights education and peace education, may be included within a basic education programme or may exist as stand-alone programmes, with or without official accreditation and recognition. The certification of teachers falls within the broader category of technical and vocational training. Efforts are required to enable refugee and IDP teachers to access accredited training and professional development which will be recognized in a different jurisdiction. The focus of this study is student certification; some of the chapters do, however, touch on the certification for teachers as it relates to student certification.

Chapter 2

Why a study on validation and certification of learning for displaced populations?

2.1 Introduction

There are a number of ways to answer the question 'Why focus on certification?'. Responses reflect issues critical for education stakeholders including students, parents, education policy-makers and programme staff in refugee and IDP contexts. The organization of the following sections is not intended to reflect any order of importance, but to give a comprehensive picture of the multiple, interconnected reasons why certification matters, especially to displaced children and youth. As highlighted in the research framework (Talbot, 2006), this issue represents a major gap in international educational policy and practice. There is little associated documentation or literature. Some 'grey literature', such as unpublished assessment and evaluation reports of NGOs and UN agencies, may mention the issue and describe project strategies, but provides little in-depth information. Consequently, although the topic is of concern to practitioners and policy-makers in the area of education in emergencies, there is no solid basis on which to generate policy recommendations for MoEs, United Nations agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF and UNESCO, international NGOs and donors.

This chapter provides the background for the argument that filling this particular research gap is a priority and that policy recommendations are needed. It lays out some interconnected rationales for the study and summarizes the perspectives of the stakeholders involved. Study of these perspectives suggests advocacy strategies for bringing the importance of certification for refugee and IDP students to the attention of influential actors.

2.2 The right to education for refugees and internally displaced persons

The right to education for all is upheld in many conventions and treaties, including the foundational Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the subsequent International Covenant on Economic,

Social and Cultural Rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that all children under 18 years of age have specific rights without discrimination of any kind (Article 1). Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child refer specifically to the right of children to education.

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees provides the legal framework for international assistance to refugees. Article 22 refers to the right of refugee children to a public education and to certification of learning achievements:

"*Article 22: Public education*
1. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education.
2. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships."

These conventions and treaties, along with the rights instruments which assert the rights of particular groups, such as women and girls, minorities and persons with disabilities, form the conceptual basis of the evolving field of education in emergencies, post-crisis and in contexts of fragility and transition. In short, education must be available and accessible to children and young people without discrimination. To ensure that refugee and IDP students are not barred from entry to education programmes, documentation requirements should be lifted. Special provisions may be necessary to ensure that refugee and returnee students are not further harmed by their situation due to the invalidity, real or perceived, of certificates obtained during displacement. Despite what the legal and rights-based instruments say, there is a lack of consistency in the recognition and certification of diplomas and other school records; validation and recognition of refugee pupils' qualifications by home or host government MoEs is not guaranteed, and often requires difficult negotiation on a case-by-case basis.

The ministers of education of the Commonwealth, at their Fourteenth Conference in Halifax, Canada in 2000, devoted a special session to the issue of education in times of crisis and reconstruction. The session did

not look at certification explicitly, but the Halifax Statement, produced at the end of the Conference, does make important recommendations with certification implications, especially relating to cross-border issues:

> "Noting that civil strife, armed conflict and activities which serve to prolong them impact adversely on education at all levels, as do natural disasters, the Commonwealth should strive to strengthen education programmes for preventing conflict and mitigating the impact of conflict and natural disasters on education in disrupted societies. The Commonwealth should develop strategies to ensure that education continues during periods of disruption, both in the country directly affected and its neighbours ..." (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000: paragraph e).

A follow-up meeting was held in Mombasa in October 2003, producing a Mombasa Declaration signed by 20 countries. The Declaration is attentive to the legal frameworks needed to support education in crisis, post-crisis and in difficult situations; it also states that education systems should be "agencies and forces for peace-building, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and nation building" (Williams, 2006), all of which may relate to ministerial responsibilities for certification of learning achievements. The guidebook resulting from the meeting does emphasize the need for the recognition of learning for the reintegration of returning students into the correct grade levels (Williams, 2006: 32). However, no specific technical guidance is provided, nor are any follow-up or monitoring mechanisms identified.

The Commonwealth ministers of education referred to both refugee and internally displaced children. The latter are usually in an even worse position than refugees, not least because the legal frameworks for their care and protection are not as clear. Although UNICEF and UNHCR are often active in IDP operations, no UN agency has consistently provided these children with education or protection. Education for IDP children and youth tends to be even more ad hoc than for refugees, and the learning they attain goes repeatedly unrecognized, as for example in the case of the education of IDPs from Southern Sudan living in camps near Khartoum (Sommers, 2005). The gaps in provision of humanitarian relief for IDPs are recognized by recent UN humanitarian relief reforms: for example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UN) Cluster approach should result in better coverage and quality of assistance, including in education (see www.humanitarianreform.org).

2.3 Future perspectives for displaced children and youth

Within the broad framework of Education for All, significant progress has been made since 2000 towards fulfilling the right of all children to education, with more attention to the educational needs of children affected by crisis and displaced either across an international border as refugees or within their own country as IDPs. There are still far too many gaps, and an estimated 39 million children are still out of school in conflict-affected fragile states (International Save the Children Alliance, 2008), many of whom are girls. The international community, national governments and organizations, and local communities and organizations are making significant efforts to ensure uninterrupted learning for as many children as possible. Minimum standards have been developed to provide guidance on the provision of education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction. Donor, international agency and government attention to education in emergencies is increasing, as evidenced in policy development, financing and participation in policy forums.

Despite these advances, the long-term impact of even the best education programmes for refugee or displaced students is compromised when students are unable to officially 'prove' their competencies with acceptable certificates and documentation. Children returning home or wishing to settle permanently in the country or province of asylum find that they cannot use qualifications gained in exile to move to the next grade or cycle of education or to obtain employment. For example, the UNHCR/UNICEF sixth grade leaving certificates earned by Rwandan refugees in Tanzania in the mid-1990s were not recognized by the Rwandan government on their return (Bird, 2003), nor, for those who stayed, by the Tanzanian government.

Frustration and disappointment is caused when this happens, given the investment in education by the students themselves, parents and other family members, and what a child's education might represent for a refugee or displaced family. Education is a powerful symbol of the future, of a "brighter future" (Winthrop and Kirk, forthcoming), and yet delivery on the promise of education very often depends on formal accreditation by authorities and the possession of validated documentation. Knowing that their studies will be recognized gives students hope, increases their motivation to continue their education, reinforces resilience and self-reliance, and contributes to individual, family and community well-being. Proper accreditation, validation and certification procedures

would increase the economic and social contribution of IDPs, refugees and returnees to their respective communities.

Ensah, a young man working in a Freetown hotel in which IRC was holding a workshop in October 2006, sought me out to tell me the story of his refugee education, much of it in IRC-supported schools in Guinea. The refugee students and teachers valued the material support provided to them, even in a difficult situation:

> "So from 1992, it was a good situation then, they brought us books, pens and all the school materials ... so we were going on to studies ... we go to school at seven o'clock, and we are off by 12.30, because of the food. At that time the UN did not know very much about the refugee situation in Sierra Leone ... but we are there having school and we have some teachers from Kailun [home district in Sierra Leone] and they are paying them to teach."

It requires determination to continue with education, and a focus on the future possibilities that it will open up, especially if going to school means a long walk there and back every day:

> "You cannot walk three miles every day without a good support, so you are just dropping out – our companions, they did ... Even me, my father told me to leave the school – the students they were just drop out ... but I say to my father, 'I just want to do this – although today there is no food, but some time tomorrow, this will save me.'"

This determination took Ensah through another three grades of school, from Grade 10 to 12, where in 1999 he was ready to sit the final West African Examinations Council (WAEC) examinations.

> "But our problem at that time – we are sitting in Guinea, and we are sitting our final examinations, but Sierra Leone was not sending any questions, Liberia was not sending any questions ... so that really caused us some problems in Guinea ... Then if you have your certificate [an IRC secondary school diploma] ... and if you want to go to school and if you want to go to college, they don't take it ... These papers cannot take me to the university."

Ensah explained that now he was back in Sierra Leone, the only way to go to college or university would be by re-registering in school for the three final years (Grades 10 to 12). For those who have completed their schooling and want work appropriate to their level of education and salary expectations, this situation is very frustrating.

2.4 Accreditation and certification: complex programme and policy challenges

For international agencies and donors, certification is a critical issue for programme quality, impact and sustainability. In the early days of the research project, its relevance and timeliness was brought home to me. An IRC colleague asked if we could discuss some of the issues the IRC programme in Chad is facing with regard to securing formal examinations and certification for the Darfurian child refugees. I was struck by the lack of documentation or written guidance that I could provide; I had no policy briefs or 'good practice' case studies to offer. I could only describe some experiences of IRC 'solutions' developed in other situations and highlight what appeared to be some of their strengths, limitations and potential relevance.

The Chad education programme is not the only IRC programme faced with certification issues. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, where the history of migration from Afghanistan and refugee education in Pakistan is a far longer one, staff on both sides of the border are working together to ensure that teachers and students receive full, validated documentation of their schooling before they leave Pakistan, and that Afghanistan has systems in place to process and validate this documentation and ensure appropriate placement in schools. In an innovative approach, an education specialist has been seconded to the MoE in Kabul to staff a 'reintegration desk' and to build the capacity of the MoE for timely and effective processing and placement of returning students and teachers. The design and start-up of this initiative was based on a wealth of experience in IRC Pakistan and IRC Afghanistan, and is supported by the broad 'good practice' framework of the INEE Minimum Standards and IRC's approach to quality education for conflict-affected populations. However, no comprehensive resource or reference material exists to help develop and implement the programme.

Even where there is willingness to create certification mechanisms for displaced students and co-ordination mechanisms are in place, technical challenges may need to be overcome - for example, matching a grade level in one system to the right grade level in another. Other challenges include placing and absorbing students who transfer mid-cycle, mid-school year or mid-programme cycle, and comparing curriculum content in order to identify 'bridging' requirements for moving from one system into another.

There are many administrative and bureaucratic barriers to easy movement from one certification system to another. These include the need for documentation such as identification cards to sit for an examination, or early registration deadlines with no possibilities for late application or changes in location. A recent example from Kenya is striking: in the aftermath of the political violence in December 2007 and January 2008, the Humanitarian Update reports:

> "The other critical issue is registration of IDP children for their national primary and secondary school examinations. The deadline was 31 March. Humanitarian agencies are engaged in advocacy with the MoE to ensure that the children can sit their examinations at the end of the year. The Ministry is assessing the number of students affected" (Office of the United Nations Humanitarian Co-ordinator in Kenya, 2008: 4).

2.5 Documentation, analysis and dissemination

Education managers and administrators, teachers, MoE staff, UN and NGO staff, and students around the world have experience of developing and implementing strategies to address these challenges and enable displaced students to achieve the validation of their learning. Some of these strategies have been highly effective and have affected the trajectories of many thousands of students; some have had additional benefits, such as building the capacity of education planners and managers in exile, preparing them to take up responsibilities for educational reconstruction on return to their countries of origin. Other strategies have been less successful and more short-term.

However, beyond programme reports and internal memos and emails, little of this experience has been documented and institutionalized, because staff working in key positions in MoEs and UN and NGO agencies move around frequently. As noted by Talbot (2006), prior to this study and the completion of one Masters thesis (Buckland, 2006), the most comprehensive document available on the topic was a short 'think piece' written by a frustrated educator, trying to rally some attention to what he saw as a critical issue for the students, families and educators he was working with in Sudan (Sesnan, 1999, revised 2007).

This limited documentation is perhaps not surprising in what is a relatively young sub-sector of education. In general, research and scholarship on education in emergencies, crises, post-crises and

reconstruction is limited and mostly very recent. Yet there is a wealth of scholarly literature on related topics such as youth and migration, globalization, human capital development and mobility. As *Chapter 3* demonstrates, we can draw upon this to develop more nuanced conceptual and analytical frameworks for understanding the importance of accreditation and certification of learning for displaced students and for finding solutions which are sustainable and robust enough to meet their varied and evolving needs.

2.6 Conclusions

The research framework developed by Talbot in 2006 highlights some of the solutions and strategies that have been developed, implemented and/or discussed. NGOs and UN agencies have used advocacy and negotiation with MoEs to pave the way for the implementation of a number of measures for various groups of students. These include:

• facilitation of cross-border examinations for IDPs and refugee students;
• facilitation of host country school access and examinations for refugee students;
• development of distance learning alternatives;
• support for refugee educators in the development of local certification boards;
• policy development for returning refugees and IDPs and for local integration;
• advocacy and technical support for development of international and regional conventions which codify the practices of certification, validation and recognition into instruments of international law.

In most cases, more than one strategy is used over time to respond to the changing needs and perspectives of the displaced population and the authorities concerned. At local levels the pragmatic strategy of testing individual students upon their entry to a new school to ensure correct placement is frequently adopted. More ambitious, large-scale solutions have also been proposed, such as a 'Refugee Education Passport' or 'Displaced Persons' International Baccalaureate'. *Table 2.1* summarizes the case study examples in terms of the strategies employed for different populations, adapted from the research framework.

Table 2.1 Summary of strategies for addressing certification challenges

Strategy	Populations	Actors Involved	Case study examples
1 Facilitation of cross-border examinations for IDP and refugee students (may include working with regional examination bodies)	Returnees, refugees, IDPs	MoEs, NGOs, UN agencies, teachers	Southern Sudan/Uganda Afghanistan/Pakistan Guinea/Liberia Guinea/Sierra Leone Ingushetia/Chechnya DRC Congo/Congo
2 Facilitation of host country school access and examinations for refugee students	Refugees, IDPs	MoEs, teachers, UN agencies, NGOs, donors	Liberia/Sierra Leone Liberia/Ghana Somalia/Kenya Eritrea/Ethiopia Myanmar/Thailand
3 Development of distance learning alternatives	Refugees	NGOs, universities	Sudan/Chad Myanmar/Thailand
4 Support for refugee educators in the development of local certification boards	Refugees	UN and NGOs, refugee teachers and educators	Inter-regional Examinations Board in Tanzania
5 Policy development for returning refugees and IDPs and for local integration	Returnees, 'locally integrating former refugees'	MoE, NGOs, UN agencies	Southern Sudan Afghanistan Burundi Liberia
6 Advocacy and technical support for development of international and regional conventions	Refugees, IDPs	UN agencies, MoEs	Latin America

Chapter 3

Conceptual framework for the study

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides some theoretical foundations for the study and maps out a conceptual framework for the problems of accreditation and certification within a complex, conflict-ridden, highly unequal and increasingly globalized world. It draws on the relevant literature in different disciplines to help analyse the data. The complexity of the situation, the ever-changing political and social environment of children and youth in refugee and IDP settlements or returning to their countries of origin after many years of asylum, and the dynamic regional and global context, all demand considered responses to what may at first seem like nothing more than a bureaucratic exercise. The chapter begins with a macro-level discussion of education in a globalized world, particularly with regard to the concurrent forces of education and nation building, and the implications for refugee and displaced students. These perspectives are complemented by discussion of the perspectives of children and youth themselves, emphasizing their agency and levels of engagement with the forces of globalization. The final section relates these conceptual elements to policy and practice in education in emergencies.

3.2 Education in a globalized world

Education contributes to cognitive, social, emotional and economic potential for individuals and their communities. The importance of schooling is widely acknowledged and considered fundamental to healthy development. At a community or societal level, schooling fulfils important social and cultural functions; it may play a citizenship function by reinforcing national or ethnic identity through curriculum, rites and ceremonies. These latter functions are especially important for refugees and IDPs; cultural repression and the inability to access quality education given in a local language or education respectful of ethnic diversity may have contributed to the events leading to displacement.

Education and human capital

Although recognized as only partially relevant to understanding the experience of education for refugee and IDP students, the concept of education as human capital is highly relevant to the discussion of certification of learning. Adam Smith first defined human capital as one of four complementary forms of capital:

> "... the acquired and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of the society. The acquisition of such talents, by the maintenance of the acquirer during his education, study, or apprenticeship, always costs a real expense, which is a capital fixed and realized, as it were, in his person. Those talents, as they make a part of his fortune, so do they likewise that of the society to which he belongs" (Smith, 1937 [1776]: 265-266).

The concept of human capital in education is linked to the notion of education as social capital: going to school is a means not only of acquiring certain skills, but of accessing important social networks and opportunities for applying one's learned skills to the generation of income.

While much of this holds true for displaced populations, and children may talk about the importance of going to school to "ensure a bright future" (Winthrop and Kirk, forthcoming), there are also some tensions. If a population is temporarily displaced, access to markets and networks can be limited, especially when movement of the displaced population within the hosting areas is restricted. Furthermore, the value of education as human capital depends on opportunities to apply skills and talents in different locations. For displaced populations, the lack of officially recognized documents or the non-acceptance of testimonies of learning from another jurisdiction counteracts the value of education as human capital. Policy dialogues on the acceptance of qualifications and experience from other countries are shaped by this tension: typically countries are keen to maintain a high value on their own human capital investments, for example by assuring job opportunities for their own graduates but accepting migrants or refugees only to fill gaps in the student population or in the workforce that their own nationals cannot or do not want to fill.

In an increasingly globalized world, the flows of people, services, information and goods mean that tight restrictions on mobility can

be disadvantageous. Students want to be able to study and use their acquired skills in multiple locations; in a market economy, courses and programmes with inter-institutional and international recognition and interchangeability are popular and valued. Initiatives such as the 'Bologna Process' for higher education in Europe are a response to such demands. In June 1999, the Bologna Declaration initiated a series of reforms needed "to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents" (European Commission, 2007). Such initiatives are aimed at the wider population, but some of their features warrant consideration in the context of the accreditation and certification of displaced children and youth. These include, for example, harmonized processes for quality assurance, cross-border recognition of qualifications and common periods of study. As *Chapter 5* discusses in more detail, the development of regional organizations and conventions to support cross-border certification for refugee and IDP students should draw on the lessons of these initiatives.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction stress the importance of transferable certification:

> "Communities want to know that governments will recognize their children's education, and that their children will be able to use their education to gain access to higher education and employment. The main concern is whether governments, educational institutions and employers recognize the curricula and resulting certificates. Aside from legitimating student test performance, graduation certificates recognize students' achievements and motivate them to attend school" (INEE, 2004: 54).

Many refugees, however, find that education systems, including validation and certification, remain within the domain of national sovereignty. And as described in the case studies below, refugees do not always stay within the purview of economic, social and other forms of inter-state collaboration. Refugees from Liberia, for example, fled into neighbouring Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, both of them outside the West African anglophone country partnerships and initiatives (such as the West African Examinations Council), of which Sierra Leone and Ghana (other refugee-receiving countries) are members.

Education and nation building

The traditional role and position of education in the nation state contrasts with the inter-operability of education certificates, cross-border initiatives and the development of regional and international agreements on accreditation of foreign certificates. The curriculum and examinations are key tools for nations to control not only the content of schooling but also its outcome. These are areas of national sovereignty, and although globalization may be increasing similarities among learning programmes around the world, curriculum and examinations remain areas of national pride and sensitivity, and hence control. National identity development for a generation of young people, for example through history and geography curricula, can be a very positive educational function, if it contributes towards national unity and not towards hostility to other countries. As explored in recent UNESCO-supported research (Tawil and Harley, 2004), nation states in processes of reconstruction use curriculum reform to consolidate peace, ethnic harmony and shared citizenship. In times of conflict and displacement, refugee education – as part of a larger struggle for autonomy and power – may also encourage identity development.

Education's political role may also have negative consequences; Bush and Salterelli (2000), for example, demonstrate the susceptibility of education systems to the influence of political regimes. This is particularly relevant for refugee and IDP students, whose flight from their country of origin may be part of a complex political story of persecution or inter- or intra-state conflict in which the governments involved are not neutral. The situation of Kunama refugees in Ethiopia is a case in point: as a very small ethnic minority community in Eritrea living close to the border with Ethiopia, they had long experienced marginalization, tensions and lack of education in the Kunama language. Pre-existing tensions were heightened during the Eritrea-Ethiopia border war (1998-2000), when they were in the area under occupation by the Ethiopian forces. Suspicions of Kunama disloyalty to the Eritrean cause were fuelled during this period, and when the Ethiopian troops left the area in 2000, many Kunama also fled, fearing further persecution (UNHCR, 2008). The long-term 'sustainable solution' for these refugees is not obvious. In the meantime, pre-school and initial years of primary school education in the Kunama language were established with the support of IRC in 2000, with attention paid to traditional dances, songs and culture. Upper years in the primary and secondary school are taught in English and aligned

with the Ethiopian curriculum in order to allow the students to achieve Ethiopian certification of their learning.

As evidenced in the case studies and in the scant literature on the subject, the challenges faced in ensuring validation of learning are political as much as they are educational. Solutions which respond to the needs of the students and their families must also take account of the complex political situations in which they are living and in which education is unlikely to be a neutral force. Refugee populations may be accepted into ethnically related host communities along the border and allowed to share local resources; but as *Chapter 15* shows, over time this may change. The refugees may become a burden on scarce resources, relations may become strained and sharing of resources and services more difficult. Host governments may have other concerns about refugees on their borders – as a security threat, a risk to the stability of the host country or a drain on resources – and may be reluctant to support any linkages with local education systems out of fear that this would prolong the period of displacement. They will be more likely to support education for repatriation, especially if the formal accreditation of refugees' learning within the host country system might lead them to compete in the job market with national graduates.

Similarly, governments in countries of origin may refuse to provide their own curriculum and examination system to their displaced students, in order to encourage repatriation. This happened when Charles Taylor returned to power in Liberia in 1999 and put a stop to the certification of the Liberian students in Guinea through the West African Examinations Council (see *Chapters 5* and *12*).

3.3 Perspectives of children and youth

Crises and displacement, violence, instability and uncertainty, uprooting from home and community render children and youth vulnerable. Support structures and networks, such as family, extended family, community and school are weakened if not destroyed. When adults are unable to provide adequate care, young people are susceptible to a range of risks and harm – physical, social and emotional. In acute emergencies, refugee children are often portrayed as weakened by hunger and disease, passively waiting for assistance.

And yet, such realities are not the full story. In many cases, displaced children and youth are active participants in migration. Although it may

be forced migration, both in flight and once settled, many are quick to understand the possibilities available to them and their families and to negotiate the challenges they face. This is especially so when it comes to going to school. As Fass writes, "Unlike their parents who cling to their homes and possessions, children cling to the hope of the future. Migration may or may not offer them that, but it is not helpful to imagine that children, especially older children, are either helpless or passive in the process of change that defines today's world ..." (Fass, 2007: 234).

The now well-known (if contested) story of the Lost Boys of Sudan is a powerful testament to this (see, for example, Bixler, 2006; Witthoft, 2007). These boys – and girls – who travelled many thousands of kilometres across inhospitable terrain, facing terrible hardships and dangers, demonstrated incredible strength of character, resolve, ingenuity and determination, apparently to a large extent motivated by the desire not only for survival but also for education. Once in camps, in Ethiopia and later Kenya, they continued to support each other, organized themselves in groups and were soon able to take advantage of the education available.

Refugees and IDPs may be isolated or trapped in inhospitable border areas, but they may still be active participants both locally and in the globalized world of internet access, email contact and long-distance phone calls. They may be physically constrained by the containment policies of their host governments, with limited contact with people outside their settlement, but may have virtual contact through telephone, radio, video, television and the internet. With access to information and ideas, aspirations for the future develop. Resettlement processes in some locations add their own local-global dynamic of expectations and aspirations, pressures and anxieties, shifting perspectives and allegiances.

Henry Giroux's description of the realities for American youth may also, as suggested by Dicum (2005: 65), have resonance for many refugee youth, "This is a world in which one is condemned to wander across, within, and between multiple borders and spaces marked by excess, otherness, difference, and a dislocating notion of meaning and attention" (Giroux 2000: 180). At the same time, older members of the community, whose own futures may look rather bleak, invest hope in their children, especially in their children's ability to earn a decent income and to help the family to a brighter future. Education is critical to fulfilling these aspirations; as evidenced in IRC's Healing Classrooms research data

from three refugee situations, school and the learning that takes place there becomes a central part of children's lives and their families' hopes (Winthrop and Kirk, forthcoming).

As *Chapter 9* examines, young people from Myanmar living in Thailand have fled from a country in which government policies have isolated ethnic minority populations and allowed them limited access to the international community. As migrants or refugees in Thailand, their mobility is restricted, and the Thai government does not allow internet access in the camps. Yet these Karen students are part of a global community; they find ways to communicate and exchange information and opinions and they strive to access programmes which teach them English and expose them to literature, information and ideas from other parts of the world. The real possibility of resettlement to the United States of America adds a new dimension to their interest in and engagement with other cultures, languages, ways of living and growing up. Theorists of globalization remind us that the global only exists in relation to the local; in these young people's lives there is also a pull to their own ethnic identity, language, cultural traditions and clothing. While there are aspirations for an internationally valid education certificate which would open doors to new opportunities overseas, there are also very real commitments to the community's own Karen curriculum, in both its content and the medium through which it is taught and learned.

Fluid notions of globalization, migration and border crossing, change and flux in identity, form part of refugee students' experiences and aspirations, and reflect their agency. These contrast sharply with the rigid nation-state, in which education – curriculum, assessment and certification – is a traditionally powerful tool for the promotion of national agendas. Boyden and Ryder deliver a word of caution to those who consider education the most important remedy for youth problems: "Education delays participation in the world of adults and lengthens childhood dependence. This is bitterly resented by many youth. When it does not guarantee employment, education can also raise false expectations among young people" (1996: 12). This also suggests an objection to the primacy of 'human capital' thinking; when unemployment is high and many barriers to income generation affect even those holding certificates, the potential value of such certificates is understandably reduced. Efforts to ensure certification of learning need to be situated within more comprehensive policy and programme frameworks for displaced populations.

3.4 Education in emergencies: policy and practice

From a policy and practice perspective, accreditation and certification are grounded in the right to education for all children, and more specifically the right of children affected by crises, displacement and early reconstruction to quality, relevant education.

Advocates of education in emergencies argue that education has important – and immediate – benefits for children affected by conflict and crisis (Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003, for example). Yet for displaced children and parents, the appeal is often future-oriented. If learning is not officially recognized (for example, if an NGO primary school certificate will not give access to secondary school), then its value is significantly reduced. Parents for whom their children's school attendance has high direct and opportunity costs may be less willing to make the necessary sacrifices if they feel that the investment has no future benefits. Students and teachers may begin to feel despondent and less committed to teaching and learning.

Williams (2001: 88) refers to certification as a key output of quality refugee education, immediate and easily measured. For UN and NGO education actors, the full accreditation and certification of student learning is a programme quality issue. Whatever the expertise of the teachers, the quality of teaching and learning and even the students' examination results, if the programme is not fully valued by the local authorities then the diminished value in the eyes of the community is a disappointing indicator of low quality.

Good practice and policy guidance is distilled in the framework of the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction developed by the INEE.[1] Key agencies responsible for refugee and IDP education participated actively in the Minimum Standards development process, and are now aligning their organizational programming tools with them.

The Minimum Standards fall into five categories:

• analysis and community participation;

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1. Supported by a comprehensive training and roll-out process to which all key education actors in contexts of displacement are committed, the Minimum Standards are an overarching framework for quality programming for refugees, IDPs and returnees. For more information on INEE and the Minimum Standards, see www.ineesite.org.

- access and learning environment;
- teaching and learning;
- teachers and other education personnel;
- education policy and co-ordination.

Within the teaching and learning category, particular attention is given to issues of curriculum and assessment. Reference to accreditation and certification is made in Standard 4: "Learner achievement is recognized and credits or course completion documents are provided accordingly" (INEE, 2004: 62).

The associated Guidance Note adds:

"Assessment results: in the case of formal education programmes, assessment should be conducted in such a way that learners' achievements and examination results can be recognized by the education authorities of the host country and/or home country. In the case of refugees, efforts should be made to obtain recognition by the education authorities of the country or area of origin. Course completion documents may include, but not be limited to, diplomas, graduation certificates, etc."

Comprehensive guidance is also offered on community involvement in decisions about curriculum and learning content for children and youth, issues such as HIV and AIDS and health education, and psychosocial well-being, complementing the development of core competencies such as literacy and numeracy. Although this is not explicitly addressed in the Minimum Standards, education programmes should meet 'standard' MoE requirements, but be supplemented with content which meets the new needs of the displaced students, such as land mine awareness, peace education, conflict resolution and health education. Furthermore, as *Chapters 12* and *15* highlight, whether refugees will eventually go home or not may be unclear, and so decisions about working with host and/or home ministries of education on accreditation and certification may be hard to make.

The same category of Standards (teaching and learning) addresses the language of instruction in terms of children's learning potential and ability to reintegrate on return – an issue linked to the formal recognition of education during asylum. The Guidance Notes state:

"Language: it is not uncommon for asylum countries to insist that refugee education programmes comply with their standards,

including the use of their own language(s) and curricula. However, it is important to consider the future of the learners, especially those who wish to continue their studies after the emergency. Humanitarian actors should strongly encourage host governments to permit refugees to study in their home or national language(s). If this is allowed, all significant learning content, teacher guides, student texts and other written and audio-visual materials not in the home language of the learners and teachers will need to be translated into the language of instruction. If this is not allowed, supplementary classes and activities in the language of the learners should be developed" (INEE, 2004: 58).

Other guidance documents advise educational planners to promote curriculum selection for refugee programmes with the goal of repatriation in mind. As Sinclair (2002: 29-30) writes, "Curriculum policy should support the long-term development of individual students and of society and, for refugee populations, should be supportive of a durable solution, normally repatriation." This is reinforced by the summary of the suggested strategies of the IIEP-UNESCO Guidebook on Planning Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction: "Plan education in refugee or IDP schools to support repatriation/return home, including the use of a curriculum (especially language of study) that is similar to that of the area of origin" (2006, Chapter 4: 12). The Guidance Notes related to this strategy advise: "When separate primary schools are established for refugee or IDP children, use the curriculum from their place of origin and their mother tongue as language of instruction when possible. This will facilitate their access to the school system in their home area/country after repatriation or return from internal displacement" (IIEP, 2006, Chapter 4: 12).

The fact that curriculum, certification, student learning and teacher knowledge and training are all inter-connected is reflected in the Minimum Standards. Standard 1 on the theme of 'teachers and other educational personnel', which deals with recruitment and selection, states: "A sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers and other education personnel is recruited through a participatory and transparent process based on selection criteria that reflect diversity and equity" (INEE, 2004: 65). "Appropriately qualified" may mean, for example, teachers familiar with the curriculum from the home country. In the case of the use of the host curriculum and integration of displaced teachers into the host education system, local teachers may also be required. In the case

of a hybrid curriculum, or a curriculum in which additional languages are taught, a mixed group of teachers may be required, especially for students in the early years of primary school. The Minimum Standards state: "It is necessary to recruit teachers who speak the home language(s) of learners from minorities who are taught in a national language not their own" (INEE, 2004: 66).

UNHCR education programme guidance also addresses commitments to seeking formal certification for students in refugee education programmes. As the ninth of its ten specific commitments to education, the agency commits to:

> "Co-ordinate local, national, regional and global inter-agency mechanisms and partnerships regarding refugee and returnee education issues including educational materials, certification of studies, teacher training and support for education. In addition, there will be inter-sectoral collaboration to ensure a cohesive and integrated approach" (2003: v).

The rationale is simply stated: "It is wasteful if education and training does not result in documented, officially recognized certificates" (UNHCR, 2003: 10). This presumably reflects the agency's understanding of the importance of education as human capital (UNHCR, 2003: 4). Although not explicitly stated, access to education officially accredited by relevant government agencies may also be linked to the commitment to ensuring 'durable solutions' for refugees and IDPs.[2]

Mechanisms are suggested for ensuring that certificates will be recognized, and for support for what can be – as the case studies show – logistically challenging operations:

> "2.1.6 Assessment and examinations. Discussions should be held with the education authorities in the countries of origin and asylum regarding recognition of studies and examinations. It

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2. Generally speaking, 'durable solutions' comprise three main options: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Forced Migration Online (FMO) states: "Voluntary repatriation – returning to one's home country – is considered the most desirable solution. If returning home is not feasible because of ongoing instability or conflict, then establishing roots in the host or asylum country may be another option. Finally, resettlement to a third country can be a solution for individuals who are not sufficiently protected in the original host country or who are considered to be particularly vulnerable for various reasons (e.g. disabled/injured, women-at-risk)" (FMO, 2007).

may be necessary to arrange for monitoring or administration of examinations by an official from the relevant Ministry/Ministries of Education. Logistical support should be provided where necessary to ensure that qualifications are recognized" (UNHCR, 2003: 11).

Access to relevant education for displaced children

Relevance is a key concept for education in emergencies. Relevance of programme content and curricula is stressed because of the need to teach critical – even life-saving – skills, attitudes and awareness, especially for displaced children. The INEE Minimum Standards clearly state this:

"It is vital that education is relevant for the learners ... The curricula adopted should be relevant to the present and anticipated future needs of the learners, and thus correlate with information that the community needs due to circumstances changed by the crisis, such as life skills, peace education, civic education, mine awareness, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, human rights and the environment. Supplementary life skills education should be available for children who are not in school, their parents, the elderly and marginalized groups" (2004: 53).

The case studies' analyses of the roles of actors concerned in certification processes highlight possible tensions between certification via adoption of the host or home curriculum and examination system and the relevance of the curriculum to the learning needs of displaced girls and boys.

In her review report to the UN Secretary General on the impacts of armed conflict on children, Graca Machel writes, "Education, especially literacy and numeracy, is precisely what girls need during and after armed conflict. Education can help prepare adolescent girls for the new roles and responsibilities that they are often obliged to take on in conflict situations" (2001: 31). Her assertion, although laudable, does not specify how formal national education programmes can be responsive to these new roles and responsibilities. The following chapters describe some of the compromises that may have to be made between relevance and certification (for example, in language of instruction and curriculum content). These examples also point to the important roles of UN and NGO specialized education agencies, which may be able to bridge some of the gaps between students' learning needs and formal certification,

via supplementary curriculum development, teacher training on topics related to the displacement, extra-curricular activities and so on.

Capacity building approaches and working with ministries of education

A key tenet of education in emergencies and post-emergencies, reflected in the Minimum Standards as well as the guidance tools and agency policy documents described above, is the primacy of national governments. Governments are the duty-bearer of children's right to quality education and should be supported in that role. When there are gaps in provision, international and national organizations can support and where possible ensure continuous access to education for all children. However, the very fact of fleeing a country or a region is an indication of a problematic relationship with the state or local authorities, or the inability or unwillingness of these duty-bearers to protect the population. Host governments and local authorities may have very different attitudes towards refugees on their territory. Nonetheless, educational support for displaced communities should be provided in ways that support and build the capacity of the host authorities to manage the situation, as far as is possible. Co-ordination and communication are critical. As the example of Guinea indicates, even when the provision of anglophone education for Liberian refugees was beyond the capacity of the Guinean authorities, with related problems of transferability, accreditation and certification, the Guinean MoE still played an important role in policy dialogue with its Liberian counterparts, greatly supporting the work of the NGO and UN education partners.

In some cases former education ministry personnel may themselves be refugees. UN and NGO partners work with them to develop refugee education systems in a significant type of capacity building which can serve to support not only quality education for the refugee students in exile but also eventual reconstruction in the country of origin. Burundian educators in Tanzania, for example, have been working closely with UN and NGO agencies and have developed a full education programme, developed and co-ordinated a specific refugee examination system and, as it became possible to engage the Burundian authorities in organizing examinations in the camps, facilitated the necessary liaisons. As these educators return to Burundi and to the MoE, their experience and enhanced capacity is informing their work. Comparisons might be made here to the experiences of South African educators who were trained,

gained experience, made plans and developed policies during their time in exile (Morrow *et al.*, 2004).

Capacity building promotes quality, appropriate education, and in any scenario of eventual return or integration, should help to ensure that educators can build on their experiences in exile and provide leadership. Their understanding and experience of linguistically and culturally relevant learning for children and youth in their communities as well as their relationships with parents and the broader community can be furthered through training and professional development. Patrice Manengere, formerly a refugee in Tanzania and a key actor in the establishment of the Inter-regional Examination Board, has now returned to Burundi and re-entered the MoE in the Department of Planning. He has a special mandate to be associated with the 'Commission des Examens' and to provide input on issues related to the return and reintegration of refugee students, including the validation of learning (interview, 23 January 2008).

In Thailand, the education authorities of the Burmese communities living on the Thai-Burmese border have a less easily defined status. As *Chapters 9* and *10* explain in detail, the Karen Education Department (KED) plays a key role in the provision of education to the Karen in the camps. It co-ordinates the school system and uses Karen language curricula, materials and teacher training programmes, and supports teachers and schools providing education to Karen IDPs inside Myanmar. And yet the KED, like its counterparts co-ordinating education for other ethnic groups from Myanmar living in Thailand (for example the Karenni, Shan and Mon Education Departments), has no official status either in Thailand or in Myanmar; its role is in many ways determined by the international NGOs and UN agencies who support it financially.

This study does not directly address the real and complex issue of possible partiality of international organizations and NGOs in such politically sensitive situations; if 'non-state actors' are supported either openly or clandestinely, what does this imply for collaboration and co-operation with the official education ministries?

3.5 Conclusions

To become the passport to a brighter future in a globalized world, students' learning and achievements must be officially recognized by authorities across jurisdictions. Any formal proof or documentation

of achievement must have validity beyond its particular system, otherwise children's ability to use their education as human capital in the marketplace, or to add to it through further study, is obstructed.

The conceptual framework developed in this chapter has three components: education in a globalized world; refugee, IDP and returnee children and youth as active agents with multiple future pathways; and recognized good practice in programming and policy for education in emergencies. This framework supports reflection on the certification and accreditation of learning and leads to recommendations that are applicable in diverse locations. It spells out the possible compromises that have to be made, the potential tensions and conflicting interests of the actors involved: education authorities, UN and international agencies, community members and community organizations, and especially teachers, parents and students. Equity of access is one issue of potential compromise: for example, because fees are required for WAEC examinations, students may officially be able to sit the examinations as private candidates but in fact may be excluded unless they have sponsors. UN and NGO agencies can overcome some of the access barriers by paying examination fees or helping with transportation, accommodation and so on for refugees and IDPs. However, NGO programmes which provide substantial financial assistance for accredited higher education, benefiting a very small number of students every year, may in fact be creating inequities. Through support for certain examination systems, agencies may reinforce negative perceptions of the value of one system compared to another. Issues of exclusion and the limited opportunities for less academically talented children to succeed in accredited education programmes (also a problem for many children in stable communities without the additional challenges of displacement) are beyond the scope of this study.

In summary, effective, sustainable and equitable planning and policy decisions related to accreditation and certification of learning depend on analysis of the complex dynamics of certification issues. The multiple actors involved need to consider the consequences of each approach, in both the short and long term.

Chapter 4

Factors affecting accreditation and certification

4.1 Introduction

Education, including certification and accreditation, is profoundly affected by political, social and linguistic factors. Factors explored in more depth below include language and ethnicity, host government policy and capacity, length of time of displacement and type of settlement. Local situations and the needs of local actors have to be taken into account when exploring global strategies and standards on certification for refugee and displaced students.

4.2 Language, ethnicity and national identity

Throughout the world, international borders are political features imposed onto areas in which ethnic groups live, speak common languages and have established service, trade, familial and other ties. This means that refugees fleeing across international boundaries may be hosted in or around communities with which they already have strong relations – for example, the refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo who fled into the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville) (see *Chapter 14*).

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire in the late 1980s (see Chelpi-den Hamer, 2007) was similar, although with some key differences. There are strong ethnic, linguistic, social, trade and contractual linkages across the border with Liberia. Shared culture, mother tongue and ethnicity made it relatively easy for some Liberian children to integrate into local Ivorian schools. However, as Chelpi-den Hamer writes, separate, English-language refugee schools were favoured by many Liberians who wanted their children to maintain their English, rather than integrate into the French language system of the host authorities.

Liberian refugees who fled to Guinea were in a similar situation; here and in other cases such as Burundian refugees in Tanzania, we see histories of colonization and post-colonial events playing out in the experience of refugee children. Liberian children may share ethnic and

indigenous language characteristics with their Guinean peers, but have quite different official languages and therefore cannot or do not want to integrate into host schools, even if the capacity were there to accommodate them. The situation for Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone was somewhat easier: although the histories of these neighbouring countries are quite different, as *Chapter 5* points out, a *lingua franca* (English) and common schooling and examination systems aligned under the umbrella of the WAEC facilitated integration into local schools.

In the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas, the majority populations share strong ethnic ties and a common Pashto language and culture. Cross-border marriage, family, trade and other linkages exist. However, political and national identity factors affect the priorities and the experience of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The national language of Pakistan, Urdu, is the language of instruction for most formal schooling, and although children growing up in Pashtun may communicate on a day-to-day basis in their own language, Urdu proficiency is required for all official communication, employment and interaction with the state. In Afghanistan, however, children are taught in either Dari or Pashto, depending on the majority population in their area, but study the other language as well. Fluency in Dari and Pashto is considered essential for educated Afghans and certainly for employment in national or international organizations. Urdu, although widely understood, is not spoken in Afghanistan, nor are Dari or Pashto taught in Pakistani schools. These language issues, combined with political tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the uncertain prospects for refugees remaining in Pakistan and the hope that one day they will be able to return to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, shape the desire of many Afghan families to send their children to refugee schools whose curriculum and examination process is fully accredited by the Afghanistan MoE. Over time, however, what might have been seen as a short-term solution may be reassessed; refugee youth who have grown up in Pakistan following the Afghan curriculum and schooling system are now officially able to access only the very limited opportunities for further studies inside Afghanistan.

4.3 Government policy and capacity

The role of an education ministry in hosting refugee and IDP students, supporting its own nationals in asylum or reintegrating returnees into its own systems, is determined by broader government policy. A

host government's position will depend on factors such as relations with a neighbouring refugee-producing state, the extent of ethnic, linguistic, economic, geographic and historical connections between the countries or the political beliefs of the refugees, as well as the government's commitments to human rights and humanitarian assistance in general and to refugees and the legal framework of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in particular. Government policy may also be determined by its capacity to provide resources for additional populations. Approaches range from the free policies of the Ugandan government (which allows Sudanese refugees to settle within and around local Ugandan communities, to access land and to benefit from local services such as health and education) to the encampment policies of other governments such as Bangladesh and Kenya (which prefer to keep refugees in camps and allow only limited movement and access to outside resources). During the height of the refugee influx in Guinea, the government took a somewhat ambivalent position, permitting both urban and camp settlement and allowing after-hours access to government schools. In protracted, chronic crises governments' positions may also evolve, as in the case of the government of Thailand with regard to Burmese refugees and migrants.

Within the conceptual framework outlined in *Chapter 3*, Talbot (2006) highlights issues which complicate the development and effective application of certification, which are discussed in both *Chapter 3* and the case study chapters.

The schooling options for refugee students in Pakistan are shaped by the relations between the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Refugees have certain rights and certain opportunities through the tripartite agreement between UNHCR and the two governments. According to UNHCR (2007*a*), extending this agreement has established the principle of voluntary and gradual return for the Afghans still in the country. Pakistan is keen for Afghans to return home by the end of 2009 when the tripartite agreement ends, with a target of 800,000 for 2008, but Cheng-Hopkins, UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, urges more flexibility: "It is always good to put a deadline, to put a numerical goal. But as we all know in such a complex situation, where people have been here for decades and where the ties are so strong (between the two countries), we have to be flexible and understanding" (UNHCR, 2007*a*). The challenges of making voluntary return attractive

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Box 2 **Technical issues cited by ministries of education**
to justify delaying or refusing to recognize qualifications
of refugees, IDPs and returnees

Technical issues:

- differences in curriculum (including syllabus subjects, subject content, pedagogical methods and length of school cycles) between different jurisdictions;
- unqualified or unaccredited refugee or IDP teachers;
- difficulties in checking the authenticity of student certificates;
- difficulties in establishing equivalences when certificates are issued by many different authorities and complicated by issues of language;
- loss or destruction of certificates;
- inability to certify incomplete academic years;
- lack of clarity for parents and pupils on policies and entry requirements.

Technical obstacles related to examinations:

- rigidity of entry/prerequisite requirements for students (e.g. nationality, age, subject pre-requisites);
- invigilation by ministry of education officials required;
- rigidity of examination timetables (requiring exams in particular places at particular times);
- physical security of the examination centre and the examination papers;
- cost and time of administering examinations;
- examination fees for students.

Source: Talbot, 2006.

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and sustainable are clear, since people are only prepared to return if they feel confident about their security and livelihoods in Afghanistan.

With such an uncertain future, refugee schooling with Afghan certification remains the preferred option. Although policy and 'good practice' guidance may promote options and solutions such as hybrid curricula which keep open multiple pathways, the political situation can change. In the 1980s and 1990s, some refugee schools in North West Frontier Province followed an Afghan curriculum, with the addition of Urdu. This had the advantage, from the national viewpoint, of creating jobs for Pakistanis as teachers of Urdu, although this arrangement was not practicable in Baluchistan Province, as the refugee camps were too

far from Pakistani population centres for teachers to commute to the schools. The Pakistan government was reluctant, nevertheless, to give full recognition to the certificates issued by refugee schools, even those run by the provincial governments, because of the implied acceptance of a policy of assimilation. This was considered impracticable with such

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Box 3   Possible political challenges

- the guarding of authority to certify, validate and recognize qualifications;
- issues of national sovereignty and Ministries' desire to protect a prerogative of their national government by insisting on their own qualification and certification processes;
- military, ideological or other political opposition, for example to returning IDPs and refugees;
- abuse of power and corruption of authorities who use recognition of studies as a commodity for sale or bargaining, for money or for various services, including sexual exploitation;
- funding and staffing challenges for Ministries of Education, which may not have or do not allocate sufficient budgetary allocations for the purpose and do not receive donor funding for it.

Source: Talbot, 2006.

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a large refugee caseload (email communication, M. Sinclair, 15 May 2008).

There may be a trade-off between official endorsement and education relevance, especially in situations of conflict and political tension when the stakes may be particularly high, such as on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Refugee schooling policy is connected to the wider political situation, and where there are concerns about refugee camps harbouring terrorists and insurgents, the overall policy is to encourage refugees to return to Afghanistan. This perspective is translated into education policy which, although not officially banning refugees from local schools, allocates no responsibility for refugee schooling to local education authorities. At the same time, the Afghan authorities are keen to ensure that refugee schooling does not lose its national content, and the consulate in Peshawar has expressed its reluctance to accept modifications to the subjects taught or to allow the study of Urdu. Such modifications would jeopardize current validation

and certification arrangements (refugee education programme staff interviews, June 2007).

The Ugandan government has a more open policy towards Sudanese refugees, as noted above. Refugee children are integrated into local schools; where the capacity of local schools is exceeded by the refugee population, new schools have been constructed with NGO and UN agency support which accept both refugees and Ugandan children. The MoE has created opportunities for refugee teachers to be trained and certified so as to be able to teach in local schools. Schools employ both refugee and local community teachers with similar status and are inspected and supported by the local education authorities. Refugee and local children register and sit side by side for the national examinations. There is little tension around curriculum and certification, as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in Southern Sudan has not yet been able to establish a full examination and certification system inside Sudan itself. In the absence of national alternatives, refugees who sit national examinations in Uganda can be confident that when they do return home a Ugandan certificate will have currency.[3]

The political situation of Burmese refugees and migrants in Thailand has serious implications for education as *Chapter 9* indicates. The current situation, in which the MoE is making moves to support and legitimize migrant and refugee education, is very sensitive. The education authorities are treading a fine line to avoid direct confrontation with the policies of the Ministry of the Interior. For example, the MoE is trying to ensure the smooth integration of migrant children into Thai schools. Registration in a Thai school gives migrant children an official identity card and permission to remain in Thailand for up to ten years (interview with staff at Migrant Assistance Programme Foundation for the Health and Knowledge of Ethnic Labour, 21 September 2007). However, because most migrant adults remain officially illegal, the ministry cannot hire migrant teachers to support those students and to bridge any linguistic and cultural gaps they might encounter. The solution in such cases is for NGOs to hire the migrant teachers for schools where there is a significant migrant population.

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3.   This is taken from discussions with UNHCR staff, MoEST representatives and education service providers at the government of Southern Sudan-IRC-UNHCR-hosted forum on the return and reintegration of teachers to Southern Sudan, Rumbek, May 2007.

One of the most challenging policy questions is that of Burmese refugees who have fled across the western border of their country, into Bangladesh. This situation is not documented in a case study in this volume, and warrants some attention. As Muslim minorities, the 26,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are technically stateless, as they are denied citizenship by the Burmese authorities. The policies of the Bangladeshi authorities, which are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, have created difficulties for them. Although recent improvements have been made, camp conditions are tough, movement is restricted, and refugee housing is overcrowded and badly in need of repair. Children make up 65 per cent of the camp population, but there is little for them to do (UNHCR, 2005).

For the most part, the Rohingya refugees do not speak Burmese; they speak the same local language as the host population and many also speak Bengali, the national language of Bangladesh. However, the Bangladesh government has not agreed to provide formal education using the Bangladeshi curriculum and Bengali language, viewing this as a first step towards integration of the refugees (UNHCR, 2005). The education 'solution' offered by a national (Bangladeshi) NGO is non-formal education from kindergarten through to Grade 5. Education is in Burmese, using the Burmese curriculum, taught by refugees from the camps who are not qualified teachers and in most cases have only basic literacy skills. Resources are limited because the Burmese authorities have not granted permission to release national textbooks to the camps; the quality of education is understandably of concern to UNHCR staff. Although the camps were established in 1992, it was only during a small 'policy window' between 1999 and 2000 that education was 'formally' permitted by the Bangladeshi authorities. The literacy rate in the camps was reported as only 12 per cent (UNHCR, 2005).

Certificates of learning achievement and schooling completion are printed locally by the agency running the schools with funding from UNHCR. As a UNHCR staff person admits, these certificates probably have very little practical value, although as "in this part of the world any certificates with reference to international organizations have a weight", they may indirectly facilitate access to secondary school (UNHCR staff, email communication, 16 May 2007). But given that the Burmese authorities will deny these refugees citizenship if they ever do return to Myanmar, the certificates would only facilitate entry into non-formal education. Refugees have no official access to secondary education,

although a small number (approximately 20) have managed to enrol in nearby local schools, 'under the radar' of the local authorities.

Although this history is a dismal one, the situation may be improving in the wake of recent changes in the government's attitude towards refugees. For example, Grade 6 was added to the primary school in 2007, and there have been discussions with government authorities about a switch to the host national curriculum in Bengali, which the refugees would prefer. In the long term, UNHCR is pursuing inclusion of refugee children in the government education system supported by UNICEF to build capacity to implement this solution (UNHCR staff, email communication, 16 May 2007). A new NGO partner is working with UNICEF and UNHCR to introduce the Bangla curriculum gradually, with the aim of starting the 2009 school year in line with the Bangladeshi system. New initiatives include training of refugee teachers, hiring teachers from local villages to fill the gaps in teaching capacity, play schools for pre-school children and provision of textbooks. Given the possibility of resettlement, refugees are very interested in learning English, and UNHCR has been able to introduce additional English language classes this year (UNHCR, 2007*b*). However, since very few refugees can in fact resettle, a switch to English as a language of instruction in the schools is not a sustainable option.

These examples from Bangladesh and Thailand show that positive change can happen over time, and that advocacy as well as quality 'on-the ground' programming introduced by UN and NGO agencies can make a difference to national policies. But experience also shows that changes in government as a whole or in the staffing of key positions can have negative implications for certification for refugee and displaced students. *Chapter 15* shows that in Côte d'Ivoire, changes in government and in policy affecting Liberian refugees had major consequences for schooling:

> "Houphouët-Boigny's cosmopolitan vision (of Liberian refugees as 'brothers in distress', to be welcomed into Ivorian communities) did not survive his death in 1993. With economic recession and rising political instability, the notion that 'immigrants were taking the bread out of the mouths of Ivorians' grew in proportion to the depth of the national economic crisis, and as the political rhetoric started to play with nationalist feelings, it found resonance with the population" (International Crisis Group, 2004).

The return of Charles Taylor to government in Liberia in 1999 was a major setback for refugee educators in Guinea. They had worked hard to develop a system of WAEC examination delivery in the refugee schools in Guinea, and had facilitated the graduation of 5,051 students (2,258 at Grade 9 and 2,793 at Grade 12). Taylor then rescinded the permission for WAEC officials to provide national examinations outside the country (see *Chapters 5* and *12*). Examination data from Grades 9 and 12 during 1992-1998 and 2004-2005 (Jones, 2005) suggest that over 4,000 students in these two grades were unable to even try for the highly important examinations which their older brothers and sisters had successfully passed only a couple of years before.

4.4 Length of displacement

The willingness and capacity of host authorities to respond to the needs of people displaced into their territory also depends on the relative size of the displaced population and the length of time it is expected to stay. These factors too will determine appropriate certification and accreditation mechanisms. When the period of displacement is expected to be relatively brief, refugee and emergency education policy guidance promotes maintenance of the home language and curriculum. Communication, negotiation and relationship-building with education authorities in the countries concerned were critical to securing recognized examinations and therefore certification for Liberian refugees in Guinea, and the financial and human resources invested, were quite significant. The IRC was involved in similarly complex negotiations and logistical arrangements to bring education ministry staff from Kinshasa to the remote corner of Congo-Brazzaville where refugees had sought asylum, to facilitate national examinations (see *Chapter 14*). In neither place was integration into local education systems seriously considered at first.

However, over time, the policy of the host community and government may change if it becomes clear that the refugee situation is likely to last longer than predicted or if there is resentment over draining of local resources and/or a feeling that international support for the displaced population is ignoring the host population's needs. The refugees' perceptions of future possibilities may also shift if it becomes obvious that in the short and medium term, the conditions under which they fled their country are not going to change, and local integration becomes a more palatable solution. The final year of refugee education in Guinea supported by UNHCR and IRC (2006-2007), for example,

was not aligned to the education system in Liberia; instead, non-formal programmes were aimed at ensuring a smooth transition for those students who would stay and integrate into Guinean schools. In this case, a far greater emphasis was placed on French.

4.5 Fees, family finances and access

While these social and political issues play an important role in defining the schooling options and especially the certification possibilities for refugee children, we cannot ignore the most basic issue of financial resources. Schooling choices are highly shaped by economics. Families often make complex calculations related to investments and returns on schooling, whether they are refugees or not. Calculations may be even more critical and complicated given that most refugees have extremely limited financial resources, mobility and opportunities, as well as uncertainty about the future.

When UN and NGO agencies offer free education to refugee children and support their access through provision of supplies, uniforms and so on, families who would otherwise have to pay school fees and cover the cost of these materials, may have little 'choice' in schooling options. This was true for migrant families from Myanmar in Thailand whose children attended migrant schools largely because transport, lunches and learning materials were provided and uniforms were not required (focus group discussion with parents, 15 September 2007). They prefer to integrate their children into national schools and have them learn the Thai language. Local Thai schools are now more open to migrant students than in the past, but the costs are prohibitive: students are not required to pay fees, but families are expected to pay for transportation, lunches and uniforms. A number of different outfits are required, for example, yellow T-shirts for the King's day.

In the border areas of Pakistan, and especially in the main city of Peshawar, some Afghan refugees attend local primary schools, somewhat 'under the radar'. Others are enrolled in small, private, English-medium schools. English is articulated as a priority for refugee parents – far more so than Urdu – and if the fees were not an issue, more students might opt for an English language programme. However, although decreasing donor funding for refugee education has called for increased parental contributions, low-cost and comparatively good education is available in Afghan-endorsed schools. With these cost implications in place,

can refugee families in precarious financial situations really exercise choice?

4.6 Conclusions

The examples from Bangladesh and Thailand indicate that positive change can happen over time, and that the advocacy as well as the quality 'on-the ground' local programming of UN and NGO agencies can make a difference to national policies. It may be challenging, but maintaining a balance between concrete local-level collaboration and joint implementation on the one hand and national-level policy dialogue on the other appears to be important. The exact balance, however, will depend on factors such as the extent of decentralization processes. Multi-level and multi-stakeholder policy development and institutionalization are important, but the experiences documented in the following chapters also indicate the role of individual 'champions'.

Policies covering accreditation and certification must recognize the social, political and economic realities of the displaced community, as well as the capacities (human, financial and political) of the host communities and authorities. Policy dialogue and development involving the participation of multiple stakeholders is one way to do this. At the same time, policies have to be understood as 'living tools' with flexibility built into them from the outset, able to respond to change as it occurs.

Chapter 5

Actors involved: roles and responsibilities

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters mapped out the conceptual and practical conditions under which efforts to secure validation and certification of learning take place. The discussion has identified factors which affect those involved and shape their perspectives on learning in general and certification more specifically. It has shown the importance of collaboration and co-ordination and recognized that actors have their own strengths and areas of influence as well as possible differences and conflicts of interest. This chapter draws on examples of certification processes to identify the roles of government ministries, departments and agencies, refugee educators and education organizations, UN agencies, international NGOs and regional organizations and networks. Examples from the subsequent chapters are mentioned, but more attention is given to examples not documented elsewhere in this study.

5.2 Government ministries, departments and agencies

As we have seen, many governments, and especially education authorities, invest highly in certification and have critical roles to play in ensuring that students' learning is validated and recognized. This applies to their 'own' students and often to those they are hosting as refugees, IDPs or migrants. Government roles, however, are shaped by political motivations and perspectives; close collaboration with either the country of origin or host government may have positive and negative consequences for students, parents and communities. Ministries of education are lead actors, but in cases of displacement they often work in collaboration with other government departments such as ministries of the interior, and with refugee agencies.

Although it is not a focus of this study, we note that the accreditation and certification of teachers is tightly linked to the accreditation and certification of student learning. Education ministries play a crucial role in facilitating both of these, as *Chapter 12* shows.

Ministries of education (MoEs)

MoEs play a critical role in accreditation and certification of learning which, as *Chapter 3* showed, are linked to the role of education in human capital development and nation building. However weakened by conflict or natural disasters they may be, MoEs are likely to play a key role in shaping the learning programme and any mechanism of formal accreditation. Despite capacity gaps and other serious system weaknesses, this is particularly important when the government has to cope with the political complexity of a conflict-related humanitarian situation. The roles of the MoE are shaped by the factors described in *Chapter 4*, and by technical and financial capacity. The following examples from Ghana, Guinea, Thailand and Burundi illustrate the importance and complexity of MoE involvement in certification of refugee students. This includes policy commitments at the national level as well as engagement with refugee education in specific locations through activities such as teacher education, school supervision and examination and learning materials distribution by district education authorities.

The provision of Liberian refugee education in Ghana illustrates the positive and major role of local education authorities in ensuring quality education for refugee children. Yet it also highlights the capacity issues affecting the ability of host education authorities to take up such responsibilities. In Ghana, Liberian children have been able to access local schools and to continue their education in the Ghanaian system. This is feasible not only because of liberal Ghanaian government policy but also because of the linguistic similarities (both education systems function in English) and the presence of the WAEC with which the curricula of both countries are aligned. There is also at least some technical and financial capacity within the MoE to absorb the refugees into the Ghanaian education system and to provide technical assistance and training to refugee educators.

At the same time, in and around camps in which Liberian refugees settled, the physical absorption capacity of the schools was overwhelmed by the number of new students and more schools were built. According to the chairman of the Buduburam Central Education Board, these refugee schools, established initially as private institutions, were formally visited and assessed by the Ghana Education Services (GES). Once approved, they were registered with the authorities and provided with the schemes of work for the GES curriculum. "Whatever we do has the blessing of

the GES", he said. At the end of each of the lower grades, all students (Ghanaian and refugee) receive a 'Grade Card'. The teachers, students and parents know that this serves refugees returning to Liberia well for entry into local schools. Those students reaching the end of the junior secondary cycle (Grade 9) are eligible to sit for the national examinations – the Basic Education Certificate Examination. Under the WAEC umbrella, the Basic Education Certificate Examination is recognized outside of Ghana, as is a similar WAEC-approved examination at the end of Senior Secondary (Grade 12), which is an international – or at least regional – passport to further studies or employment. With these formal examinations, all students receive a Statement of Results and a Certificate (M. Bah, interview, 24 April 2007).

Approval and registration of refugee schools in addition to regular monitoring of the schools clearly relies not only on political will and an inclusive refugee policy, but also on the capacity of the GES to provide such support. Furthermore, the Liberian teachers have benefited from the technical inputs of the Accra Teachers Training College and the Cape Coast University. This is a critical component of the integration of the refugee schools into the Ghanaian system and subsequent student certification. Liberian teachers were either untrained volunteers or former teachers with only limited training; they were also unfamiliar with the Ghanaian curriculum. Training was critical to make sure that attending the school would enable students to succeed in the formal examinations.

At first, the training focused on curriculum content and on the 'nuts and bolts' of teaching and classroom management, for which a 'Certification of participation' was issued. The teachers were also keen for more formal recognition of their learning, and were hoping to secure funds to continue the training programme and eventually acquire a formal teaching qualification (a 'C' Certificate).

Chapter 12 documents IRC's story of working to achieve certification of learning for Liberian and Sierra Leonean students in Guinea. The host MoE in Guinea played a different role in facilitating accredited education for the refugees in the east of the country. The MoE did not directly provide educational services or technical support for the refugee students and teachers, and very few refugee students were integrated into local schools. However, the MoE did give permission for after-hours access to school buildings for UNHCR and IRC to establish schools for urban refugees in and around N'Zérékore, Guéckedou and

Macenta. As the situation evolved, it was realized that the conflict in Liberia would prevent the return of the refugees for some time. At the request of IRC, the Guinean MoE became an official liaison with the education ministries in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In 2003, when efforts to re-establish the previous link with the Liberian MoE and facilitate the Liberian WAEC examinations in the refugee schools could resume, David Walker, IRC's Education Co-ordinator, reached out to the Guinean officials for help in negotiating the arrangements for cross-border activities. This co-ordination and the official liaison role of the Guinean authorities made it possible for an additional 3,427 students to sit for the Grade 6, 9 and 12 WAEC examinations (1,135, 1,475 and 814 students respectively) (Jones, 2005).

Chapters 9 and *10* describe the challenges and opportunities for certification of students' learning on the Thai-Burmese border. For many years the Thai MoE had limited involvement in the provision, oversight or co-ordination of education for refugee and migrant populations from bordering countries. (Refugees from Myanmar living outside the designated refugee camps in Thailand, and not registered with Thai officials, are considered as migrants rather than refugees.) This limitation was partly a policy decision by the Royal Thai Government (RTG), and partly an attempt to avoid conflict with the Ministry of the Interior. However, the involvement of the MoE, as well as the commitment to education for children and youth from Myanmar living in Thailand, has increased significantly over recent years. This was explained by the Deputy Director of Tak[4] Educational Service area as part of the commitment made to Education for All by the RTG. Consequently, budgets have been made available to the province, giving greater support to the migrant schools. The government was also concerned about the insurgency in the south of Thailand and the lack of MoE awareness of the curriculum and other activities taking place in the Muslim schools there. The MoE felt the need to have some control over these 'Learning Centres' (the official name for types of learning environment other than MoE schools). The commitment of the former Director of Basic Education in the MoE, Khun Yng Kasama, was also critical to the shift in policy of the MoE and increased engagement with NGOs and UN agencies providing and supporting refugee and migrant education (L. Pramote, interview, 15 September 2007).

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4.   Tak is a Thai province bordering Burma with a relatively high number of refugees and migrants from Burma.

The openness and commitment of the Deputy Director of Education, Tak province, in addition to the financial resources he had been able to secure from the central ministry for this work (almost 1 million baht, around US$30,000), made partnership with international NGOs such as ZOA and World Education possible. The latter is providing technical support for curriculum translation, harmonization and development as a means to better align what was being taught in the migrant schools with the Thai curriculum. A curriculum of four core subjects based on the Thai primary school curriculum will be made available to the migrant schools in order to support better integration of children into Thai schools, especially for post-primary studies. World Education has also developed a 'Thai as a Second Language' curriculum for the migrant schools, again aimed at supporting integration into Thai schools.

The Tak education authorities are also committed to taking on some monitoring and supervision functions for the registered migrant schools. The Deputy Director explained that each of the provincial supervisors had been given an additional four or five learning centres within their area to support. The provincial MoE has also provided teacher training for migrant teachers, based on the Thai curriculum, and a study tour to another province in which integrated schooling is taking place. There is also commitment to the integration of migrant children into Thai schools through the nomination of community teachers to schools with a large number of migrant students. There are no additional funds available for this, although the schools do count their migrant children exactly the same as host community children in order to calculate their per capita-based school budget. Somewhat trickier, however, is the Ministry of the Interior policy that restricts employment of 'illegal' adult migrants and so makes them ineligible for employment as teachers. In this context, NGOs have more flexibility to hire and support such additional teachers.

Although this process of curriculum alignment and harmonization is centred around the Thai curriculum, World Education also works to retain the Burmese content of the curricula used in the migrant schools and to ensure that key elements of the home curriculum are retained. This is not an easy task, and a consultative process is required with greater stakeholder input. World Education acknowledges this challenge, but is also excited about the opportunity for frank discussions with the Thai authorities on curriculum development and improvement (interviews, World Education staff, 14-20 September 2007). The fact that the curriculum alignment

is only for four core subjects implies that the migrant schools can still retain other content relevant to the migrant students.

The engagement of the Burundian MoE in refugee education, accreditation and certification over the border can be seen as a major factor in the reintegration of children as they return from asylum in Tanzania. Since 2004 refugee students have been able to sit the national examinations just like any other Burundian student (and even on the same day and time). As described by Jean-Marie Rurankiriza, the Directeur de l'Enseignement Secondaire Général et Pédagogique des Collèges Communaux et des Etablissements Privés, this allows for the 'réintegration sans détour' of the students. Reintegration is 'very easy', even 'automatic', into schools and university, and especially so since the function of the Commission Nationale de Réintegration Scolaire has been decentralized and returning students no longer have to present themselves to the central MoE in Bujumbura (interview, 2 May 2007).

The MoE procedures for facilitating the examinations in Tanzania are complex, but are deemed necessary to maintain the integrity of the national examinations. The system is financially and logistically supported by UNHCR, with a prior cross-border trip to identify the appropriate examination centres and collect a list of the candidates. The second visit is for the actual presentation and invigilation of the examinations, after which the papers are collected and brought back over the border. The Director explained that the papers are coded and have no name or indication on them as to whether the students are refugees, to ensure neutrality in grading. The refugee students' papers are divided amongst the four grading centres across the country. Throughout the process, security and integrity of the national examination are of utmost concern. The bag in which the papers are carried has two locks, the keys to which are given to two different people, thus ensuring that the bag can only be opened in the presence of both. Each year the examination itself is developed through a serious process involving a ten-day retreat for selected Burundian educators, without access to telephone or visitors, to develop the question papers in complete isolation.

The general lack of bureaucratic hurdles to educational reintegration is confirmed by returnee students in high school in Makamba, southern Burundi. However, they do emphasize the major difficulties of school placement at the secondary level and fee payment. The MoE policy directive on fee exemption for returning students was respected for their

first year, but the second year they had to pay, which was not what they had been led to expect (focus group discussion with returnee students, Lycée, Makamba, 2 May 2007). According to UNHCR, a directive was issued in October 2006, but not sufficiently disseminated among refugees or across the schools in the areas of high return. Although the policy is a positive step from the MoE, it requires clear follow-up to establish where and how the costs of the fee exemptions will be defrayed (interview, UNHCR community services staff, Makamba, 2 May 2007).

The MoE Burundi clearly has the capacity to organize national examinations over the border without compromising the quality or integrity of the certificates. There is a more or less predictable number of students each year, the timing is known well in advance and will not change. Challenges, as for other MoEs in a similar situation, lie in the planning and financing required to provide adequate student places in the areas of high return. The rate of return is unpredictable and uneven, and the MoE receives limited information on, for example, places of origin. A further complication is the sudden expansion in demand for secondary education inside Burundi, in part due to the commitment made in 2005 by the new President, Pierre Nkurunziza, to free universal primary education. As explained by a representative of the MoE Department of Planning (interview, 4 May 2007), although about 130,000 students (refugees and national students) sat the primary school completion examination (Grade 6) in 2006, only about 40,000 places in secondary schools were available for them.

Refugees from Southern Sudan in Uganda have been able to attend Ugandan schools, benefiting from relatively high standards of instruction compared with their country of origin as well as access to internationally recognized examinations. This access is highly sought after by Sudanese students, for whom there is no equivalent within Southern Sudan. They travel across the border to sit the examinations, at great expense and also potential risk. These students who study the Ugandan curriculum in Southern Sudan, or refugees who study in MoE schools in Uganda, learn all about Uganda but have no similar formal teaching about their home country. Life skills are included in the Ugandan curriculum, with attention to safe sex and HIV and AIDS prevention, highly relevant for the refugee students whose precarious socio-economic status may compound the age and gender-based vulnerabilities of all children in the border area. However, no curriculum content speaks specifically to the experience of the refugee youth and, most important in the current situation, no content

prepares the students for return and reintegration into Southern Sudan. The reality is that given the value of the formally accredited learning and certification, students and their communities are prepared to accept this compromise. With plans to provide Ugandan national examinations inside Southern Sudan for at least the next two years (see below), it is to be hoped that schools and teachers supporting refugee children, as well as families, community groups and other organizations, can fill some of these gaps.

In Guinea a 'blend' of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean curriculum was developed (see *Chapter 12*). This unusual approach responded to the needs and interests of two different refugee populations, and was also formally accredited by education authorities. Often, a strategic choice to opt for a country of origin curriculum, integration in host community schools or a national MoE curriculum in refugee/IDP schools calls for trade-offs in terms of relevance of students' learning. The students do gain insight into the host society and its culture as well as easier social interaction and integration and further learning and employment possibilities. Yet, as experienced educator Mr. Bah said with some reticence about Liberian students in Ghana, "The children learn about Ghana ... nothing about Liberia." However, solutions have been found: "I have brought back some curriculum documents from Liberia – just copies – and we are trying to include a little, 'side by side'. For example, if you are teaching about Ghana you can also compare with Liberia. We are not changing the Ghana content."

In parallel, one can question the continued relevance of the Afghan schools for refugees in Pakistan. As *Chapter 8* describes, with the fall of the Taliban important efforts were made by the UN and NGO agencies supporting education to ensure appropriate co-ordination with the new MoE. Education for repatriation, in Afghan languages and using the Afghan curriculum and policy framework was established. One major aim was to ensure that refugee education would contribute to human capacity development of the Afghan population in general and would prepare female students and teachers in particular for leadership positions inside Afghanistan on their return (Qahir, forthcoming). The current reality, however, is that with many long-term refugees remaining in Pakistan, a generation of Afghan youth is formally qualified for further study or employment inside Afghanistan, but quite disenfranchised within Pakistan. This is a broader issue, related to the size of the refugee population relative to the capacities of host communities and institutions,

government policies on refugee status and protection, and the political limitations placed on Afghan integration into Pakistani public institutions and services. Afghan refugees are able to enter private universities and colleges, but the fees are impossibly high for most families. IRC and Basic Education for Afghan Refugees (BEFARe) have been able to complement the Afghan curriculum with content on relevant topics such as health education and reproductive health, but inclusion of Urdu as an extra subject would, they were warned, jeopardize registration and certification by the Afghan consulate (discussions, IRC Pakistan staff, March 2008).

Other government agencies

Although they are the primary responsibility of the education ministry, accreditation and certification are also influenced, and in some cases supported by other agencies in the host and/or home country governments, such as consulates and refugee agencies.

In Ethiopia, a country currently hosting around 115,000 refugees (UNHCR 2005*b*), mostly from Somalia and Sudan, the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) plays a critical liaison role between the Ethiopian government and the UN and NGO partners supporting education for the refugees. ARRA is the main conduit for external and domestic assistance for refugees, which channels much of the UN support (e.g. from UNHCR and the World Food Programme). It provides camp management services and co-ordinates refugee management committees and other service providers; it may also provide some direct services, such as running a health clinic and related programmes. ARRA is a direct provider of education in the Sudanese refugee camps in the west of the country, and has worked with the regional education board to ensure that Sudanese students in the higher grades can follow the Ethiopian curriculum and sit for the Ethiopian national examinations, held in English.

The Afghan consulate in Peshawar (an agency of the government of the country of origin) plays a major role for Afghan refugees in Pakistan, including education for Afghan children. The consulate acts as an intermediary between UNHCR and the NGOs supporting education for refugees and the MoE in Kabul. Its functions include registration of refugee schools, students and teachers following the Afghan curriculum, transmission of examination papers from the Afghan MoE to refugee education providers, validation of student grades and records

from registered refugee schools, and information sharing and policy dissemination from MoE Kabul to the refugee education community.

The consulate has been a steady link between the MoE and the refugee students and teachers, and even in the early years of the new government in Afghanistan (of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, 2002-2004) and the early phase of reconstruction within the MoE, it was a point of reference for the refugees themselves as well as for the education service providers. If enrolled in a registered refugee school, students returning to Afghanistan have been assured that their documents and certificates will be endorsed with the consulate stamp and thus be valid in Afghanistan.

However, gaps and delays have frustrated the Afghan refugees and education providers. For those located in and around Quetta, far away from Peshawar in Baluchistan province, where there are no similar consular services, the frustrations are greater: the delays in receiving the validated certificates from Peshawar are longer, and concerns about loss of papers en route are more serious. The flow of information between the MoE, the consulate and the refugees is limited. NGO representatives personally visit the consulate to discuss their individual cases and concerns with the education 'focal point' staff member recently appointed. In and around Peshawar, refugee education programmes supplement the information and resource material (curricula, policy documents and updates, etc.) from the consulate with information from their own organizations with offices in Afghanistan, their direct linkages with the MoE in Kabul, and informal cross-border networks and information sharing. Since the 1980s, the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees office in Peshawar has held monthly education sector co-ordination meetings, inviting partner NGOs and UNHCR to discuss updates.

Communication gaps can be at least in part attributed to organizational gaps and staffing shortages in the MoE in Kabul and to the absence of any one counterpart in Kabul with whom the consular representative can liaise on issues handled by several MoE departments, such as curriculum, examinations and teacher status. Understanding the importance of the complementary roles of the MoE and the consulate, as well as the need for a counterpart in the MoE for the consulate's education focal point, IRC Pakistan – with technical support and liaison with IRC Afghanistan – supported the secondment of a national staff person in the MoE in Kabul. In position since the beginning of 2008, this person,

an experienced educator who has spent many years supporting refugee education, reports to an MoE supervisor. She manages the cross-border exchange of information and policy updates and acts as the focal point for returning students and teachers to facilitate the validation of learning or qualifications and placement in schools. Working out the administrative details of this position and reaching a common understanding of its roles, responsibilities and relationships has been a long process. However, IRC hopes that the incumbent will contribute significantly to the reintegration of teachers and students and that insights will be gained into how best to support the MoE in this respect, informing similar work in the future (author experience, 2007 to 2008).

5.3 Refugee educators and education organizations

Experienced and highly competent educators, education planners and administrators are, as already noted, often to be found among displaced populations. These refugee educators are keenly aware of the importance of schooling for displaced children and youth, and understand that if learning achievements are not recognized by appropriate authorities they will not secure the 'bright futures' that the children seek (Winthop and Kirk, forthcoming). The Liberian educators in Ghana, as we have seen in one example, have developed a system for quality education provision that meets the students' need for formally recognized learning and benefits from the technical and financial capacity of the host education authorities. At the same time they try to fill some of the inevitable gaps they identify in the students' education in exile, supplementing and contextualizing the Ghanaian curriculum with Liberian content. It is significant, however, that the teachers' capacity to do this has been strengthened through training and professional development provided by the GES. Many of the teachers were not trained or experienced educators before they fled Liberia, and while commitment to children and youth and to the promise of education for the community is important, opportunities for learning and access to information, training and professional growth are also a significant factor in teacher recruitment in refugee settings (see, for example, Kirk, 2004).

The Inter-regional Examinations Board (IEB) developed by and for Burundian and Congolese refugees in Tanzania is one example of the role of refugee educators in the provision, accreditation and certification of education for displaced children. The examination system was initiated in 2000 as a response to the difficulties faced by francophone refugees

in a largely anglophone country where the national languages were also quite different (Kirundi in Burundi and Swahili in Tanzania). The policies of the host government towards refugees were at first quite flexible, and refugees who had fled their countries much earlier had integrated into local schools and communities. The new refugees who started to arrive during the crisis of 1996 were far greater in number and were expecting soon to return. During the period of conflict in Burundi, however, it was impossible to imagine that the education ministry could support the certification of refugee learning outside the country.

Before his recent return to Burundi, Patrice Manengere was the IRC Education Co-ordinator at Mtabila Camp, Kasulu; he was also the Secrétaire de la Commission of the IEB and had been central to the initiative since 2000. As he explained, the IEB was established to make it possible for the Burundian students to sit examinations when the Burundian authorities were unable to support formal examinations and certification in Tanzania. Until 2004, the refugee educators managed to obtain the MoE question papers and give these to their students after the official examination period to check their progress against national standards, but there was no formal validation. A variety of examinations had been provided by the NGO implementing agencies, but the quality was poor and the question papers themselves apparently full of mistakes. With the support of UNHCR and UNICEF, experienced educators from Burundi and the Republic of the Congo were keen to take the matter into their own hands.

The IEB system is known for its strictness and its methods for ensuring the utmost security of examination papers and grades and therefore the legitimacy and value of the certificates. Based on the model known to the refugee educators, it is implemented in exactly the same way as in the home country, even down to details such as the students sitting two to a desk but each writing different examinations. The IEB functions in a very precise and participatory way. The education co-ordinators and inspectors from each camp contribute to a bank of possible examination questions; a technical team then compiles the examination papers, a process which takes approximately three days at the beginning of May every year (and was actually taking place during the field visit to Tanzania). The examination itself was scheduled for 10 May 2007, to be conducted simultaneously in three centres in different camps, with each student facing four different papers on the same day: French (one-hour

paper), mathematics (one-hour paper), Kirundi (30-minute paper) and 'études du milieu' (30-minute paper).

From one camp alone, 800 students were expected for the examination in May 2007; marking is therefore an intensive process, involving five teachers selected from each camp, working together for ten days of grading and checking. The results are entered into the computer and only two days later posted for the students to check in the camps. Certificates may take a little longer, although since families may be delaying repatriation to wait for the examination results, efforts are made to be as quick as possible. Certificates are completed at the camp level and then go to UNICEF and UNHCR for signing, a process which in the past has been subject to some delays.

The IEB conducts an equally rigorous teacher training certification process for Burundian teachers. Initially a team of experienced refugee educators was selected to work with UNICEF to provide teacher training for those refugee teachers without prior experience or qualification. A standard programme was developed, to be taught every Saturday for two years; certification depends on both a formal examination and classroom practice. The core training experts each year compile the examination questions and conduct the classroom observation, a process which in 2007 was scheduled for a total of 115 teachers. Although it would seem that there is no official 'equivalence' between the IEB teachers' examination and the Burundian teacher certification process, Manengere is sure that the certification is accepted by the reintegration and education authorities when teachers do return.

Although the MoE is now able to come to Tanzania to conduct and oversee national examinations which are fully recognized in Burundi, Manengere noted several reasons for the continued importance of the IEB. The refugee students never actually receive their MoE certificates in the camps, only once they repatriate to Burundi. Furthermore, even if they get the certificate, there is a problem with the translation, and the Tanzanian authorities, especially the universities, prefer the IEB certificates. The withdrawal of Refugee Education Trust (RET) funding for the IEB at secondary level was a blow for students who saw it as a pathway not only to university entrance but also to UNHCR scholarship programmes.

The IEB educators' zeal in establishing a recognized examination system, for students whose learning achievements would otherwise have

been undocumented, is noteworthy. It serves as a powerful antidote to prevailing assumptions about the low levels of teacher quality and capacity in refugee and displacement settings and as an alternative to the stress that is usually placed – not without good reason – on teacher training and upgrading.

5.4 UN agencies

UN agencies play a key role in humanitarian assistance and in support for governments and communities during return and reconstruction. UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Food Programme are particularly engaged in education, with an increasing presence from UNESCO in reconstruction. All are members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) global Education Cluster and active members in the INEE. As such, they are committed to the implementation of the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction, and therefore have a commitment to the certification and recognition of students' learning. *Chapter 3* describes the global position of UNHCR with regards to certification and accreditation of learning; in this section specific examples from countries of interest illustrate some of the ways in which policy guidance translates into activities and funding priorities at the field level and draws out some of the strengths and weaknesses of UN agency engagement.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

As a UN agency with the global mandate and responsibility for care and protection of refugee and displaced populations, UNHCR has a special role to play in certification and accreditation. In repatriation situations, UNHCR typically has a tripartite agreement with the host and country of origin governments which determines the overall policy, roles and responsibilities for those concerned; education may or may not be explicitly referenced. UNHCR policy guidelines refer to the importance of accreditation. How such agreements are reached in the field, and the negotiations and co-ordination manoeuvres between governments, refugees and implementing partners, have not been fully documented before. Yet individual UNHCR staff and country teams have had major co-ordination and financing roles in many of the humanitarian efforts examined in this study. As *Chapter 15* shows, UNHCR's role may also be problematic, especially when decisions made on the ground are not supported by sufficient background analysis and technical insight. Technical capacity for policy and programming interventions is a serious

issue for UNHCR, where typically a community services officer with little or no background in education is responsible for education programmes and may have to make decisions with considerable impact on the lives of young people. This is an issue discussed in the conclusions to this chapter. Although beyond the scope of this study, UNHCR may also work with the MoE to ensure that returning teachers can enter the system, especially those with training and experience from refugee education programmes.

UNHCR has played an important role in supporting the IEB in Tanzania, especially the post-primary students sitting examinations at Grade 9 and 12. Along with UNICEF, the two UN agencies are represented on the IEB Commission and provide technical support to the educators charged with the process. Withdrawal of support for the post-primary IEB examinations has been balanced since 2004 by increased support for the implementation of the Burundian examinations in the camps for students at both primary and secondary level. Following the 2003-2004 tripartite agreement, UNHCR contacted the MoE in Burundi to arrange for the examinations in the camps and to discuss an integration process for the returning children and youth in the middle of their schooling. UNHCR now provides financial and logistical assistance to the MoE in Bujumbura to enable representatives to travel across the border to Tanzania with the examination papers, invigilate the examinations and oversee the entire process before returning with the completed papers for grading within the same system as all other national students. Making support of the home authorities a priority is reflective of UNHCR's support for voluntary repatriation and focus on the successful return and reintegration of students in Burundi.

Inside Burundi, in areas of high return such as Makamba, UNHCR is also present to support the process of reintegration into local schools. The Community Services Officer in Makamba explained UNHCR's role in following up with the authorities in the cases of students who have problems with their documentation. For example, some students from the camps had not passed their Grade 6 examination but were still allowed to continue into secondary school, and now want to continue their education in Grade 8 or 9. An arrangement has been made with the local education authorities to allow such students to join the classes of the level they have been following; however, they must sit the Grade 6 examination along with the other Grade 6 students at the end of the year. If students have lost their certificates, UNHCR will persuade the schools to accept them with an attestation of the level they have reached. At the primary level,

the students simply have to present themselves at the school with their documentation; however, the schools risk being penalized if the regular controls discover students enrolled without complete files (UNHCR staff, interviews, 2 May 2007).

As *Chapter 12* documents, UNHCR plays an important logistical and supporting role in cross-border certification for refugee students in Guinea, complementing the technical leadership of the IRC. For example, UNHCR facilitates cross-border travel for education officials to visit each other, as well as to carry out the technical tasks of examination provision.

In Liberia, UNHCR also plays a key role in the reintegration of students. UNHCR has secured agreement from the MoE that returning students could enter school without problems. Even those with no formal documentation were to be placed through a simple entrance test, and with the ministry eager to make it possible for children to go to school, there were to be no official bureaucratic hurdles. At the same time, in an interesting twist in the complex issues of accreditation and certification, the UNHCR education officer had specifically requested her colleagues to refrain from issuing certificates. The officer was concerned that if some students were returning to Liberia with the assistance of UNHCR and with certificates provided and endorsed by UNHCR, it might make it difficult for the many other students who were spontaneously returning to Liberia without external assistance and would most likely not have a formal school certificate. Without such certificates, the students attempting to gain entry to schools could be at risk from exploitation (interview, 20 April 2007).

In the complex regional context of West Africa, Liberian authorities are working for the reintegration of their own returning students and teachers, but are also hosting refugees from Côte d'Ivoire and working with UNHCR to develop an appropriate and acceptable educational solution for the francophone refugees. This solution also has to be acceptable and on a par with the opportunities that exist for the host community. The numbers of refugees are relatively small, and although there is only one camp, many are dispersed in local communities with whom there are strong ties. Yet although they speak common local languages, the *lingua franca* is different, as are the schooling systems in the two countries. Responding to requests from the refugee community for UNHCR assistance, a school was built in the Saclepea camp in 2004

to provide refugee education in the language and curriculum of the country of origin. With the support of an implementing partner, Ivorian teachers were recruited and paid incentives by UNHCR. The refugee community felt that the quality of the Liberian school system was very low, and given the language differences, was anxious for the children to continue to study under the Ivorian system.

However, the situation has proved to be problematic, with issues of quality in the provision of the Ivorian curriculum as well as equity between refugees and host communities. Despite numerous requests, textbooks and curriculum documents have not been obtained from Abidjan, and so the teachers are teaching what they remember and/or using the locally available Liberian English-language materials which neither teachers nor students fully understand. Despite efforts from UNHCR, the camp school operates without official linkages to the Ivorian system and no formal certification opportunities for the students, nor is it in any way linked with the local education authorities. As reported in IRIN (2007), the situation is clearly of concern to parents: "This is really paining our hearts," said Aisha Berete, mother of five of the 387 children attending the Saclepea Refugee Primary School in eastern Nimba County. The children "are losing their Ivorian identity and how will they fit in to the Ivorian school system once we return home?" (IRIN, 2007).

UNHCR policy, as highlighted in the IRIN article, is to support education in the language and curriculum of the home country, but this requires co-operation between both host and home government authorities. 'Civil disturbances' and 'bureaucracy' are cited as major barriers to co-ordination with the Ivorian authorities.

However, despite these challenges, UNHCR is now increasing efforts to ensure quality and full recognition of an Ivorian school; curriculum materials have recently been obtained and will be used in the new school year (IRIN, 2007). At the same time, there is an alternative for the non-camp-based refugees. Building on the success of an alternative approach in communities which include smaller numbers of refugees, UNHCR is supporting community-based afternoon French classes for the refugee students in the same Liberian schools that they are attending in the mornings. This 'both ways' solution is seen as a far more sustainable and equitable one, especially if UNHCR is successful in advocating for work permits, official registration and payment from

the Liberian authorities for the Ivorian teachers (interview, UNHCR education officer, 20 April 2007).

UNHCR has recently played quite a different role in supporting the cross-border accreditation and educational integration of displaced students in Latin America. UNHCR was invited to provide input into high-level meetings and policy development of the MoEs and eventually heads of state in the region, and specifically to suggest wording for an additional clause in the regional education convention to be developed and proposed by Ecuador. Within a broader discussion on regional recognition of students and certifications, the particular issue of concern was that without a specific clause, refugees could be excluded from school in a country of asylum because they could not return to their home country to retrieve their certificates for endorsement by the host country authorities (email communication with UNHCR staff, September 2007).

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Working closely with and in support of MoEs, UNICEF plays an important role in policy development and co-ordination to ensure that displaced and crisis-affected students can have formal and accredited education. As the co-lead of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) global Education Cluster with Save the Children, UNICEF's role in refugee education may grow. Collaboration between UNICEF and UNHCR on the issue of certification is of particular interest in relation to the reforms in the UN aiming at 'One UN'. In the refugee camps of Chad, UNICEF and UNHCR are working closely with IRC and other NGO partners to address some of the critical certification issues for the Darfuri refugees. Grade 8 students who have no opportunity to sit recognized final examinations in the camps are taking risks to cross the border back into Sudan to take their examinations there (email communication with UNICEF staff, June 2008).

The case described earlier of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is also relevant here: as educational opportunities aligned with the host country system have come to be available, the relationship between UNHCR and UNICEF has become particularly important. UNHCR, working directly with the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MFDM), had no relationship with the Ministry for Primary Education of Bangladesh. Greater involvement of UNICEF in refugee education can draw on the agency's relationships with and support for this ministry to benefit the refugee students.

UN support for IEB in Tanzania has also been a collaboration between UNHCR and UNICEF. Initially UNICEF was supporting the primary examination (Grade 6) and UNHCR, with other partners, the secondary level examinations (Grades 9 and 12). Now that secondary examinations have been stopped, the primary certification is still financially supported by UNICEF but with continued involvement of UNHCR, for example in the signing of the certificates. Not only have the agencies provided the financial resources to support the process, they have also added their institutional weight to what might have been a low-value certification process. A more cynical interpretation, however, may be that the link between the IEB and UNHCR university scholarships also played a significant role in legitimizing the examination.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

As a UN agency specialized in education policy and planning, and structured around National Commissions, UNESCO has strong relations with MoE officials at various levels and in different departments around the world. However, because UNESCO has not in the past had an emergency response mandate in education, nor been extensively involved in chronic crises or post-conflict scenarios, its role in certification and accreditation for displaced students has been minor, and focused on Somalia in particular. With the 2008 establishment of an Intersectoral Platform on Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Situations within UNESCO, with a Section for Education in Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Situations, this will change. UNESCO may be able to play a larger role on this issue in future humanitarian crises.

The UNESCO Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction (PEER) merits attention as an initiative established in 1992 in response to the Somalia crisis. Initially working in the three sub-entities of Somaliland, Puntland and central/south Somalia, UNESCO PEER provided examinations and certificates for students at the end of the upper primary cycle (Grade 8) and at the end of secondary (Year 4). UNICEF is a partner in the upper primary examinations, but the secondary education work is undertaken by UNESCO alone. In a highly fragmented education system with very fragile education authorities who cannot manage large-scale operations such as examinations, UNESCO PEER is one of a number of agencies and networks providing an examination and certification process for schools in Somalia. UNESCO

PEER works with Somali educators to develop, conduct and grade the examinations and distribute the certificates out of its three Somalia-based offices. Certificates, however, are printed in Nairobi because of the difficulties of large-scale printing inside Somalia. The programme is now operating in only Puntland and central/south Somalia. In 2007 between 1,500 and 2,000 students were projected to sit the examinations, mostly at the Grade 8 level (data provided by UNESCO PEER, 15 June 2007).

The examinations are based on a previous MoE curriculum, currently under review through a joint process involving other agencies such as UNICEF. The MoE role has evolved as the authorities have managed to establish themselves at differing levels in the three entities. UNESCO support for certification and accreditation is a sensitive issue: in central/south Somalia, it has stamped the certificates, yet as of 2006 this was not the case in Puntland and Somaliland. The MoEs in these two regions wanted to take ownership of the process and have the Director-General of Education and the Director of Examinations sign the certificates. The situation in central/south Somalia is quite different: the education authorities resisted any suggestion that UNESCO stop stamping the certificates, because officials concerned about the compromise of impartiality through political pressure on local officials, who would be directly involved in the examination processes, felt in need of continued support from an international body such as UNESCO.

According to Paul Gomes, Director of UNESCO PEER, UNESCO's role in this process is crucial since, unlike other agencies, it can ensure legitimacy of the examinations and of the standards required to pass as well as the security of papers, grades and certificates. UNESCO's stamp is also considered to have a certain status: even without official equivalencies, the UNESCO PEER certificates are validated and accepted internationally. Somaliland and central/south Somalia have seen resistance to local certification on the part of students and local organizations who felt more secure with an internationally recognized certificate (interview, 15 June 2007).

5.5 International non-governmental organizations

Working collaboratively with UN agencies, MoEs and refugee and IDP communities, international NGOs also play important roles in the formal accreditation and certification of displaced students. Sometimes international NGOs, which may have more flexibility in approach and fewer bureaucratic obstacles to work around than partner UN agencies,

can act as liaisons between ministries and educational authorities in countries of origin and asylum. They also have expertise and resources to support complex and technical solutions such as curriculum alignment and translation. As implementing partners for education programmes, they may be responsible for key activities such as organizing examinations. They can sometimes identify and develop alternative and innovative solutions to apparent impasses. The solutions may start on a small scale, but provide experience and evidence for subsequent scaling up.

This section cannot document the work of every international NGO in every relevant context, but it illustrates some of the strategies organizations have developed and the challenges faced to ensure accreditation and certification.

International Rescue Committee: experience in West Africa

As an international NGO providing support to conflict-affected populations in over 30 countries around the world, IRC is often able to leverage programme staff, link with MoEs and other organizations and agencies on either side of an international border, and thus engage multiple partners in policy discussions about accreditation and certification. The national staff members working in IRC's education programmes or other agencies are often former teachers, principals and education staff who retain close contacts with their peers and former colleagues in the ministries and other agencies and can engage them in negotiations which would be very difficult for outsiders. Teacher training, support and development is an IRC priority; in most cases it has been working simultaneously with ministries on student and teacher certification, another reason for the success of its initiatives.

No global study of certification could ignore the role of long-time IRC West Africa education expert David Appea-Walker. A Ghanaian with a Liberian wife, who has worked in education programmes in IRC Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, Walker's deep understanding of the region and his efforts to enable formal accreditation of learning for refugee children have earned him the respect of many in the region and beyond.

IRC's support for education for conflict-affected populations in West Africa has a long and rich history, told in a number of agency documents (for example, Lange, 1998; Tennenbaum, 2004; Triplehorn, 2005) and described in part in *Chapter 12* below). Between 1991 and 2007, working closely with UNHCR, IRC education staff took steps which were instrumental in the successes achieved by Appea-Walker

and his colleagues. These were innovative and high-stakes moves for an NGO, intervening in policy dialogue on issues traditionally considered the preserve of national, governmental authority. The perspective developed by an international NGO operating in several countries in the region fortunately matched the regional perspectives and possibilities of the WAEC, an agency critical to facilitating activities that individual governments could not undertake. The process depended crucially on the networks and relationships of IRC staff who were personally known to the officials in positions of responsibility and knew how to work with them.

It has been suggested that one reason IRC was not able to achieve the same agreements with the authorities in Sierra Leone was resistance to the perception that IRC was operating like an education ministry (Jones, 2005). IRC was, however, quite unlike a ministry in its flexibility, possibilities for negotiation and cross-border collaboration. The organization understood the importance of the certificates to the students and teachers, but unlike a government ministry was apolitical and unconcerned with issues of national identity and jurisdiction. Under the guidance of senior management, national staff members were able to act on their own understandings of the region and of the particular dynamics of education systems and governance. They also worked at several levels at the same time, engaging in high-level policy discussions with education ministry representatives as well as setting up examination centres, making the logistical arrangements for visiting examiners and so on. As described by one IRC staff member, the work was at times challenging: for example, the 'blended curriculum' met with resistance from some of the refugee teachers who were keen to maintain their own curriculum and were concerned that it was being 'subordinated'. Teachers protested to UNHCR, and IRC had to work hard to maintain their support; in the mixed schools IRC had a policy of alternating leadership, with a Liberian head teacher and Sierra Leonean deputy, or vice versa (IRC staff interviews, West Africa, Sierra Leone and Liberia, April 2007).

One lesson learned is the importance of the complementary role of the host MoE, even in a situation such as Guinea where the refugee students will not initially be integrated into the host system. In retrospect, IRC staff recognize the need for collaboration with education authorities at the 'préfet' and 'sous-préfet' levels and see their early lack of linkages to the ministry in Conakry as an obstacle to progress. Learning from this experience, in 2004 IRC sought the collaboration of the ministry in

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Box 4   Steps to certification of refugee teachers and students in Guinea: International Rescue Committee, Guinea, 1991-2005

- 1991: careful development of a harmonized curriculum which would combine the core elements of both Sierra Leonean and Liberian curricula and allow students to successfully reintegrate into the systems of both countries.
- 1991 onwards: teacher training for refugee teachers to ensure they understood and could implement the harmonized curriculum.
- 1991: conversion chart developed for reporting grades of returning students.
- 1991: discussions initiated with MoE and WAEC officials in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Liberia more successfully than Sierra Leone).
- 1992-1998: WAEC Liberia exams administered in Guinea at Grades 9 and 12. Despite continued efforts, Sierra Leone authorities refused to engage and Sierra Leonean students who returned with the Liberian WAEC exam were forced to repeat their final years and re-sit the WAEC Sierra Leone exams.
- 1998: IRC approached MoEs in Sierra Leone and Liberia to talk about certification for refugee teachers: MoE Liberia agreed, but MoE Sierra Leone declined.
- 1999-2003: setback as Charles Taylor took power in Liberia and refused permission to WAEC officials to test the refugees in Guinea. Refugee students in IRC-supported schools received an IRC graduation certificate not formally recognized by either MoE Liberia or Sierra Leone.
- 2000-2003: Despite conflict and collapse of Liberian government, IRC continued teacher training as agreed, hoping the agreement still stood;
- March 2002: teacher training workshop for Sierra Leonean teachers in Guinea approved by MEYS using Sierra Leonean distance education modules, with Sierra Leonean teacher educators flown to Guinea. Repatriating teachers were not fully validated but were able to complete the remaining modules for certification. After 3 sessions, the programme stopped.
- 2004: Walker engaged with MoE Guinea, reinstated dialogue with MoEs and got approval from MoE Liberia for reinstatement of cross-border examinations; students sit MoE Liberia WAEC exams in 2004-2005. MoE Sierra Leone allows refugee students to return to Sierra Leone to register as private students and sit the exams.
- 2004: Renegotiation with MoE Liberia started and 2005 MoU reached for 'C' certification of teachers inside Guinea.
- 2005: 472 Liberian teachers graduated with 'C' Certificates in a landmark event in N'zérékoré, Guinea, in presence of MoE Liberia.

a mediation role which brought about the reinstatement of the Liberian WAEC examinations.

Another lesson from IRC experience is the need for linkages between teacher education, accreditation and certification and student certification, especially for long-term refugee communities, where teachers' capacity and motivation is difficult to sustain without official recognition, and capacity development for reconstruction in the country of origin must also be supported. Working with ministries for agreements on students' certification can pave the way for negotiation regarding their teachers. Conversely, as in Ghana, MoE engagement in teacher education and certification processes may be a prerequisite for government support for refugee education within the host system.

Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service: focusing on quality education in Tanzania

The Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) has been supporting Burundian refugees in Tanzania since 1972. Refugee Programme Co-ordinator Jesse Kamstra described how, through its own funding channels (faith-based organizations), TCRS has been able to fill gaps created by donors' focus on primary education and support post-primary education for refugees. Even without the financial concerns, post-primary certification was far more complicated, and procuring textbooks from Burundi was difficult. At the same time, without the rigid framework of the formal system it was possible to focus on quality and to supplement the books that they did have with other useful materials in English and Swahili. Kamstra observed, "We didn't have certification, but we did have quality." He notes that 32 students passed the Tanzanian University entrance examinations. Between 1994 and 1999 students graduating from this secondary education programme were rewarded with a TCRS/Lutheran World Fund (LWF) certificate, which was apparently highly regarded, precisely because of the emphasis on quality. The situation changed in 2000/2001 with additional funding from RET and others, as well as the introduction of the IEB, which initially included post-primary examinations at Grades 9 and 12. TCRS' direct role in accreditation and certification of students ended and TCRS started to support the IEB system; through the linkages with the Tanzanian authorities, students completing it were eligible to sit the university entrance examinations. As noted, post-primary level IEB examinations have since stopped, but since the tripartite agreement was signed between

the governments of Tanzania and Burundi and UNHCR, including clauses on education, the Burundian MoE has been able to implement the curriculum and examinations in Burundi and thereby qualify refugee students for university and other further study or employment within Burundi. Curriculum reform in Burundi has seen the introduction of English as an international language and Swahili as a regional language, thus addressing some of the earlier relevance and quality issues for refugees in Tanzania (interview, J. Kamstra, 27 April 2007).

World Education and ZOA in Thailand: curriculum alignment and development

World Education and ZOA are close partners in education for Burmese children and youth in Thailand and are using a similar approach - curriculum alignment with the Thai MoE to create sustainable opportunities for formal validation of their learning. Translation of Thai, Burmese and Karen curriculum documents and a careful process of content alignment and enrichment should enable refugee and migrant children to study in their own languages, taught by their own teachers, and for their learning to be recognized by the Thai authorities. The NGOs are working in close collaboration with the Thai authorities and the community-based refugee and migrant education authorities to align refugee, migrant and host community schooling. This should permit transfer into a Thai primary school during the course of the primary cycle, or access to secondary education in Thai schools at the end of the cycle. The process for achieving such outcomes is also important, and World Education is working with the ministry staff to support their efforts and help develop their interest and commitment to migrant education in general. The Ministry of Education in Tak Province, for example, organized a training session for migrant teachers at which World Education provided technical input on science teaching.

World Education is aware of the need to balance national level policy discussion with technical co-ordination and collaboration at the provincial and district level. It is essential to follow up the high-level commitments made by the education ministry in Bangkok, to acknowledge the financial commitments made by the central authorities to the provinces to support migrant education, and to work with them to sustain these levels of funding and maintain the national dialogue. At the same time, in a decentralized system much of the day-to-day decision-making takes place at the provincial and district level, and requires co-ordination and

collaboration at that level. World Education has, for example, hired Thai staff to work closely with the provincial education ministry (interviews, World Education staff, September 2007). The strategies, tools and resources developed and the lessons learned at the district and province level need to be 'fed upwards' into the national policy level discussions, and cross-province synergies and leveraging of experience need to be developed to improve the situation for other displaced students. This sort of inter- and intra-level communication about accreditation and certification is another task for international NGOs as they implement programmes with specific populations which often span different provinces and participate in national-level co-ordination forums such as the Committee for the Co-ordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT).

ZOA supports education for the refugees in camps along the Thai-Burmese border. ZOA's partner is the Karen Education Department (KED), the Karen community agency which runs the schools and education programmes in the camps and also issues certificates to students graduating from these schools. ZOA is working with the KED and the MoE, and engaging other partners such as UNICEF, to look at possibilities for an accredited education system in which students could earn official certificates and more 'portable' evidence of their learning achievements. This would also result in curriculum development and improvement: the KED curriculum is considered rather poor, and KED staff themselves look forward to strengthening it, with some understandable reservations about the potential loss of culturally and linguistically important content. Even though IDP students in KED-supported schools inside Myanmar would not be able to earn a Thai or Thai-endorsed certificate, they would nonetheless benefit from an improved curriculum which gave them access to up-to-date content (ZOA staff interview, 19 September 2007).

Jesuit Refugee Service: facilitating examinations and certification for students from Southern Sudan

As formal examinations and certification have yet to be established, students in Southern Sudan have some limited opportunities to sit for official examinations over the border in neighbouring countries, especially in Uganda. This has long been the situation in Southern Sudan, and although the MoEST acknowledges the need for examinations and accreditation, this is only one of many competing priorities. Perhaps more urgent is expanding access to quality primary and secondary education;

currently only 20 per cent of primary-aged children are attending school (Joint Assessment Mission Sudan. 2005: 183).

There is a history of cross-border educational movement in the south of Southern Sudan, especially movement of students across the border to sit internationally recognized 'O' level and 'A' level examinations in Uganda. With the support of the Dioceses, faith-based organizations and local NGOs, the border area, particularly around Kajo Keji, has a concentration of schools, mostly secondary schools. A new Southern Sudanese curriculum has been developed for basic education but is not widely used, and there are no unified curricula, syllabi or examinations for secondary level. Most schools have a hybrid collection of teaching and learning materials, using whatever is available, including NGO-developed materials as well as textbooks, teachers' manuals and so on from neighbouring countries. At secondary level students are likely to follow a Ugandan or Kenyan curriculum and be taught by teachers who have learned from similar materials and/or have been teaching as refugees in these countries; these students can then sit formal examinations in Uganda or Kenya.

There are other challenges, however, not least of which are the costs involved in securing formal recognition of learning: examination entrance fees, travel, accommodation and food and other supplies needed for the multi-day journey across the border to sit the examinations. Access to secondary school is already very limited, and paying for transportation, school fees, supplies such as books, uniforms and maintenance costs away from home is already challenging. Girls especially are at risk of exploitation as, less mobile than boys, they seek out different ways to earn money to support themselves in their desperate struggle to stay in school (Kirk, 2005*c*). As noted by the Director of General Education in Southern Sudan, crossing the border creates additional protection, safety and security challenges for young people (presentation at MoEST-IRC Forum, 8 May 2007).

The small number of students who have struggled to stay in school and to complete their studies under these circumstances surely deserve official recognition of their achievements. From a state-building perspective, the future of Southern Sudan partly depends on these cohorts of educated young men and women with internationally recognized certificates which would give them access to tertiary education as that became available. Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), which has been

supporting education for Southern Sudanese for many years, has played a major role in overcoming logistical and political complications to enable individual students to sit examinations within Uganda.

According to JRS staff, many more students want to sit S4 examinations but do not have legitimate Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) certificates, or else fail the pre-examination screening test. This test is important given the costs involved in the exercise; JRS pays 12,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately US$7) for each examination candidate, as well as providing transport, accommodation and food while the pupils are in Uganda.

JRS has been able to develop this system through links with local representatives of the MoE in Uganda, with whom it was already working to support refugee education inside Uganda. At the primary level, it was the inspector of schools together with the district education officer who allowed JRS candidates from Southern Sudan to sit the examinations in Uganda, alongside students from refugee schools in Adjumani. This inspector has understood that students will have to sit examinations in Uganda until the ministry in Southern Sudan is able to take on the responsibility, hopefully in 2010. The possibility of students sitting the Ugandan examinations inside Southern Sudan as an interim measure was planned for 2007: the state minister for Eastern Equatoria visited Uganda and Kenya to establish contacts, and the governments of Uganda and Kenya agreed to this in principle. However, JRS and county officials were concerned that the registration process would be delayed and that it was too risky to wait for the state ministry to complete it; they therefore went ahead with registering students to sit the examinations in Uganda in 2007 (JRS staff email communication, 23 May 2007).

Following up on the verbal commitments made by the authorities concerned, for students to sit for the examinations in Southern Sudan requires some additional steps, as well as careful co-ordination between bodies including the Juba-based MoEST of Southern Sudan, the state MoEs, the Ugandan MoE and the Uganda National Examination Board. According to JRS staff with experience of the processes involved, if MoEST wanted to set up an examination centre in Nimule, for example, the state minister would need to delegate the county education officer from Magwi County to approach Uganda National Examination Board with all the relevant information (names, numbers of candidates and so on) as early as February for examinations in November. More discussions

and agreements would be needed as to where, how and by whom the grading of papers would take place. Although complex, implementation of the agreements and the establishment of examination centres inside Southern Sudan is critical to expansion of fully accredited education. In the short term, this should allow more students to sit internationally recognized examinations. In the longer term, the experience of working with the Ugandan authorities, including the Uganda National Education Board, enables MoEST to learn more about the whole process of national examination and qualification in order to develop the Southern Sudanese system.

Given these developments and at least the prospect of a formally accredited secondary education system, JRS continues to support the process while shifting its approach and starting to

> "... pull back a little from the day to day organization and management of examination processes amongst other things; it is for the MoE in Sudan now to be the key negotiator in this process, as we are also trying to encourage them to take responsibility for co-ordinating external examination processes in the Counties where we are working ... We have also been encouraging parent, teacher and school management structures to take up this issue and liaise with local authorities to pressure for this" (JRS staff email communication, 16 May 2007).

Refugee Education Trust: an alternative solution for post-primary education

The Refugee Education Trust (RET) specifically addresses the need for greater access to and quality of post-primary education for refugees, returnees and the internally displaced. It operates in nine countries across three continents, offering programmes of secondary education, vocational (or professional or technical) education and tertiary education, including teacher training, in addition to life skills and other complementary programmes. RET recognizes the special importance of accreditation and certification for secondary education:

> "Secondary education has a well-defined structure and is organized around a vast and time charged curriculum ... The importance of secondary education is that it allows refugee students to access many higher learning and professional opportunities. This is simple and possible if a refugee can obtain a recognized certification of his/her

knowledge and skills. However, most may not be able to. For this reason, the RET promotes and intervenes to create liaisons between the MoE of the home countries, so that the refugee can be given due credit upon voluntary repatriation. When it is not possible, the RET promotes negotiation with the host country or other institutions to find alternatives to validate the education of the refugee" (Refugee Education Trust, 2003: 18).

In the refugee camps of Chad, RET is supporting an alternative solution to secondary education for refugee students, working in collaboration with the International University of Africa (IUA), Khartoum. The Secondary Education through Distance Learning (SEDL) programme is targeted at those who wish to finish secondary education and attain an internationally recognized secondary certificate, but is also open to able students who may not have sat the primary education completion examinations or may lack the documentation to prove it.

The SEDL programme is so far operating in nine camps in Eastern Chad, with over 90 refugee students and 25 local students initially registered. The model is a self-study, home-based programme, supported by facilitators. The school structure in Sudan covers eight primary years followed by three years of secondary schooling, for which students have to choose between the Arts and Science options. In the SEDL scheme, however, students have to take three mandatory subjects (English or French, Arabic and Islamic studies) and then can chose between four and seven additional subjects from a total of 13. Mathematics will most likely become mandatory from 2008. The students generally do self-study but meet regularly for learning support and group discussions organized by Subject Animators. The Subject Animators help the learners to understand difficult concepts, sometimes in actual teaching sessions. RET is aware of the difficulties of self-study and has purchased pressure lamps to enable the SEDL students, many of whom are also teachers in the primary schools during the day, to study at night.

Establishing the programme confronted many challenges, not least of which was convincing the students that secondary education could take place outside a formal school. Finding facilitators for the students within the camps has also been a challenge, and in the end the students' learning has relied a lot on the attention of RET staff. Most of the national staff read and write Arabic and they are able to help in subject animation; some teach English, Arabic language and Islamic studies.

With 92 refugees and 19 local students travelling to Abeche to sit for the International Secondary Certificate examinations in July 2007, doubts about the feasibility of the arrangements have been allayed. Examiners from the IUA brought the examination papers to Abeche and supervised the examinations, thereby making attainment of secondary education

> "a reality and to some a miracle. The refugees could not believe the SEDL programme would actually materialize. However, instead, it rekindled the dream of achieving the highest echelon of education, hitherto denied them" (RET staff email communication, 28 November 2007).

It is significant that 10 per cent of the SEDL students are girls. According to RET staff, preliminary results indicate that the SEDL students have performed well. The approved results were to be released by early December 2007 and the next examination session was planned for January 2008.

With this initial success, RET is now making arrangements to launch the programme in Oure Cassoni and Guereda area (for a total of 12 camps), and is engaged with the IUA in discussions as to how to expand the programme. The RET met with the dean of the faculty of education at the IUA to discuss in particular the possibility of opening examination centres closer to the camps to forestall logistical difficulties, including the safety of students travelling to Abeche, particularly during the rainy period. The IUA indicated willingness to open examination centres in towns nearer the refugee camps and to work on reducing the fees (RET staff interview, 17 May 2007 and subsequent email communication).

This section has provided examples of NGO certification initiatives and described how their efforts may complement those of others. There are also tensions. An important one being the critique of NGOs operating in isolation, focused on the short-term success of one particular project with limited attention to the 'big picture' within which they are working or to some longer-term objectives of education programming. Short-term donor funding for humanitarian assistance linked to quantitative, input-focused indicators does not always promote or even allow time for the often long and complicated negotiations that may be necessary to reach agreements for cross-border examinations or non-discriminatory access to host country examinations.

5.6 Regional organizations, networks and conventions

This final section documents the role of the WAEC in certification of learning for refugee students in West Africa. It is the only example of a regional organization identified during the research, and is significant in that it successfully operated at scale over a sustained period. WAEC experience is instructive in the context of international developments in the direction of more harmonized and standardized education and examinations systems and the growth of networks and mechanisms for exchange and linkages. It indicates the potential of regional bodies to support certification for students displaced beyond national borders.

The WAEC is a rare example of a regional educational organization to have played an important role in the accreditation of learning for refugee children as they move within the region. It was established in 1952 as a response to the Jeffery Report, commissioned by colonial governments in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, which had strongly recommended the setting up of a West African Examinations Council in the four countries. The countries passed appropriate ordinances in their Legislative Assemblies in 1951, charging the WAEC with the responsibility of determining the examinations required in the public interest in West Africa, and empowering it to conduct the examinations and award certificates. Liberia joined the WAEC in 1974. The original ordinances have now been replaced with a Convention which confers legal personality on WAEC as an international organization (WAEC Nigeria, 2007).

WAEC has no specific mandate for refugee certification, nor policy guidelines on the issue, but as explained by the head of the international examinations department (WAEC official, interview, 23 April 2007), when a request was made in 1991 to create examination centres in the refugee schools and camps in Guinea, it needed a response. Lack of fixed guidance on this matter meant that the organization could be flexible in finding ways to respond to the situation, initially through collaboration with the MoE in Liberia. However, at the time the government of Sierra Leone was not supporting WAEC at all; government policy promoted the return of its refugees and did not support continued education in exile. WAEC is a government-dependent body which has to maintain a delicate balance between regional norms and standards and national sovereignty, and therefore had to be somewhat cautious. As explained at WAEC Sierra Leone, there were also concerns about practical issues such as the

safety and security of examination papers taken out of the country, and financial constraints on travel and cross-border invigilation. From their office in Freetown, officials were sceptical about what was being taught in the refugee schools in Guinea and had no way to assess the quality of the curriculum and instruction (WAEC Sierra Leone official, interview, 11 April 2007).

At the same time, the MoE in Sierra Leone has permitted refugee Liberian children on its territory to sit national examinations in host community schools. Students attending refugee schools have been able to register for the final examinations through local host community schools, and those in the schools already were registered just like Sierra Leonean students. IRC has covered the examination fees of the refugee students while the ministry covers the fees of local students in the regular government schools. As mentioned above, with financial and logistical support from UNHCR and IRC, a small number of Sierra Leonean refugee students from Guinea have also been able to register as private candidates and return to Sierra Leone specifically for the national examinations.

Now that repatriation from Guinea is almost complete, WAEC Liberia and Sierra Leone are involved in the validation of certificates of returning students as well as accreditation for those who missed out. As Ensah's story in *Chapter 1* illustrates, and as described in *Chapter 12*, Sierra Leonean students who graduated from refugee schools between 1999 and 2003 but could not complete WAEC examinations face difficulties in accessing higher education and suitable employment. Through WAEC, students can register as private candidates and sit for examinations they missed, but the next challenge is one of time and economics. Fees are required (approximately US$35 per student) as well as at least one year of pre-examination school attendance in order to complete the continuous assessment component of the examination (WAEC Sierra Leone official, interview, 11 April 2007).

Liberians returning to their home country have an easier time: the Liberian MoE is more flexible in its learning validation and enrolment policies while acknowledging that the Liberian WAEC examinations are not as highly regarded as the Sierra Leonean ones. Students who return to Liberia from Sierra Leone have no problems in the validation of either school-issued mid-cycle 'progress report cards' or WAEC Sierra Leone examinations. Those returning from Guinea are also well received into local schools and usually given a placement test with or

without a school progress card or certificate (focus group discussions with returnee students, 18 April 2007). The recent efforts of IRC and the education ministries of Guinea and Liberia mean that students successfully graduating in 2004 and 2005 are able to return with WAEC Liberia examination certificates.

The situation for Liberian refugees in Ghana is a little different since, studying in Ghana Education Service (GES) schools, the Liberian refugee students can sit the Ghanaian national examinations like any other students. In fact, although both Liberian and Ghanaian examinations are offered in these countries under the umbrella of the WAEC, there are concerns about the quality of the Liberian examination. The Liberian MoE is working on improving standards up to those of international examinations by 2011. In the meantime, the refugee students in Ghana have no need or real desire to take the Liberian examinations, as the Ghanaian certificate is accepted in Liberia, and in fact has a higher status than a Liberian certificate; returning students may delay their return until after completing one of the Ghanaian national examinations in order to acquire this prestigious certificate. Furthermore, Liberian examination certificates are not accepted from students seeking admission to Ghanaian institutions. Because the WAEC Ghana examinations do not require any prerequisite papers or proof of earlier examination passes, the refugee students can immediately sit the examinations for which they are ready.

WAEC's role in West African refugee education reflects the importance of regional perspectives on complex issues of cross-border education. WAEC had already secured commitments from member governments to principles of inter-operability in education systems, and had allayed fears of the loss of their national prerogative in education, specifically in curriculum and examinations. Similar regional examination councils exist in other parts of the world, such as the Caribbean, which seem to have similar benefits in terms of promoting movement and flexibility through harmonization, while respecting the jurisdiction of and relying on the inputs and commitments of national governments (Caricom, 2007). As noted by Bray (1998), although they may be able to acquire bargaining power and achieve economies of scale in administration and other functions, regional organizations are also relatively fragile; they have to grapple with the tensions arising from the demands of national identity and self-determination and also interact with international forces. The East African Examinations Council, for example, formed in 1967, has been defunct since 1979. It is clear that

regional initiatives need to align with and support national activities; networks enabling exchange and inter-operability between education systems offer a possible model.

As noted in *Chapter 3*, European initiatives in higher education pursued through the Bologna Process, which aims to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010 "in which students can choose from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures" (European Commission, 2007), are also relevant. They are linked to many other social, political and economic initiatives within the increasingly 'open' space of Europe, and are not without tensions. Challenges to educational integration include the maintenance of national ownership and culture within a European model, as well as critiques of the basis – or bias – on which the European model is built. There are also inequities – or perceived inequities – between national systems, and reluctance by certain countries to adopt the education systems of others.

The Bologna Process is a very particular model, building on multiple European agreements, laws, mechanisms and so on. However, Obasi (2007) argues that it has lessons and implications for universities in Africa and elsewhere, and these lessons could be applied more generally to other levels of education. Obasi stresses the importance of maintaining national sovereignty and quality control as well as financial responsibility, and cites the recommendation that ministers of education show commitment to "increasing the compatibility and comparability of their higher education systems while at the same time respecting their diversity". Obasi also suggests that African educators attend to the Bologna Process partners' "commitment to making quality higher education equally accessible to all" and establish conditions for students to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background.

Although developed for the general student population, the agreements made under the Bologna Process have paid some attention to the particular needs of refugees and displaced students. In fact the 'Lisbon Convention', or the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Council of Europe, 1997), on which the Bologna Process is founded, makes special provision for this population group, demanding that: "all countries shall develop procedures to assess whether

refugees and displaced persons fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications cannot be proven through documentary evidence."

Bologna Process countries are expected to report on their ratification and implementation of the Lisbon Convention, and efforts have been made to ensure that Bologna Process implementation does support refugee students (Council of Europe Working Party on Refugee Qualifications, 2008).

In Latin America, ministers of education continue to work towards the 'convalidation' of educational qualifications and certificates. A Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean was adopted in 1974 (UNESCO, 1974), and mechanisms are in place for the gradual implementation and monitoring of initiatives taken in pursuit of the Convention's aims. Unlike the Lisbon Convention, the Latin American and Caribbean Convention does not make specific mention of displaced persons; in this chapter, however, UNHCR is making efforts to support proposals from Ecuador for the integration of specific policies and mechanisms to address the needs of refugees and migrants who move from one educational jurisdiction to another.

5.7 Conclusions

This chapter has mapped out the positions, experiences and roles of key actors involved in the validation and certification of displaced students' learning. It discusses their complementary roles, the strengths and possibilities that each may bring to certain situations and ways in which collaboration between these actors can have positive outcomes for students. In both future and existing situations, policy dialogue and co-ordination should include wide consultation and engage a variety of actors in support of policy development and implementation by government authorities, respecting the aspirations and priorities of the affected community and the best interests of the students.

At the global level, the INEE, the IASC global Education Cluster and the 'One UN' reforms aim at improved collaboration and co-ordination among humanitarian actors. Collaboration should be built upon increased understanding of the strengths of particular agencies, using common inter-agency standards, tools and processes. At the same time, the experience of the refugee educators in Ghana and Tanzania,

for example, speaks to the need for all partnerships, such as Education Clusters, to engage with and listen to the teachers and other education personnel. Community participation is a cornerstone of the INEE Minimum Standards: the involvement of members of crisis-affected communities in decision-making is needed in all areas of programming and co-ordination.

This chapter has by definition focused on the external agencies who are potential recipients of technical and policy guidance. The role of refugee educators is also stressed and, as suggested in the final chapter of *Section I*, could be further supported by teachers' organizations and unions. The participation of students, parents and other community members in all of these efforts is also critical. It is their voices, perspectives and priorities for education which should be guiding the technical, logistical and policy-level activities of the external agencies. Education Cluster and other inter-agency co-ordination mechanisms should facilitate engagement with these community members, and make it more consistent and systematic.

Chapter 6

Summary, conclusions and policy recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter draws heavily on the outcomes of the international seminar on Certification of the Learning Attainments of Refugee and Internally Displaced Pupils, convened on 21-23 January 2008 by the Research Partnership on Education in Conflict, Emergencies and Reconstruction and hosted by IIEP Paris. This first international, inter-agency seminar on the topic of certification achieved a number of positive outcomes:

It brought together over 25 key actors and stakeholders from refugee, IDP, migrant and returnee groups around the world, representing MoEs, UN agencies, NGOs, educators and researcher perspectives, primarily in Africa and Asia.

The seminar shared the rich experiences of those working towards certification in difficult circumstances, in order to identify good practice and lessons learned, as well as 'lessons not learned'.

These were then **established as an initial repository of documentations** to be placed on the INEE website for dissemination and to stimulate further documentation and dissemination of certification-related experience.

Finally, **the seminar identified key strategies and next steps** to ensure that all children and youth gain the right to certification, as a key component of quality education.

In articulating this message, participants reflected the imperatives of the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction and a moral commitment to quality education for children and youth affected by war and disaster.

Through presentations, discussions and group activities, participants confirmed the value of the conceptual frameworks presented in *Chapters 3*, *4* and *5* of this study. The experiences, good practices, lessons learned

and 'not learned' were presented during the seminar and discussed by the participants and are documented in the case studies in *Section II*. They were complemented by additional presentations, the content of which has been incorporated into the following chapters.

Participants noted that actors such as MoE officials, UN agency staff and NGO representatives all have complementary strengths and opportunities which, when co-ordinated, can help to overcome the many obstacles to effective recognition, assessment, certification and validation of learning, including political resistance, technical capacity, weak or adverse policy frameworks and resource gaps.

Identification of the limitations of the specific actors and the partnerships they may create shaped the development of a set of broad recommendations for advocacy and co-ordination, strategies and implementation, and capacity building.

6.2 Recommendations

Advocacy and co-ordination

UN, humanitarian and non-governmental organizations should co-ordinate their advocacy activities in order to counterbalance political interests and other barriers to the right to education of refugees and IDPs, and to the accreditation and certification of their learning.

Accreditation and certification procedures arising from such co-ordination should be undertaken **in collaboration with government departments** to establish their validity and acceptance in both host and asylum countries.

Co-ordination mechanisms and activities should be reviewed on a regular basis to encourage synergy and leveraging of complementary strengths, positions and relationships between the actors concerned. They should be flexible enough to respond to complex, changing situations.

Implementation

The most appropriate accreditation and certification options should be determined in partnership with affected communities. These solution(s) should be regularly reviewed and alternatives developed in anticipation of or in response to changes in the situation. They should be in line with INEE Minimum Standards and other relevant guidance and take account of local dynamics, capacities and perspectives. Strategies should be identified, such as fee stipends, transportation allowances and

curriculum enrichment, in order to address possible issues preventing students from achieving accreditation because of access, equity, or relevance. Funding for these activities therefore should be made available in a timely manner to enable actors to respond to changing circumstances.

A frequent barrier for children either entering or completing their education centres is **documentation, whether of identity or of progress**. Therefore it is essential that **missing or unrecognized identity cards should not prevent school entry, progression, formal evaluation (i.e. examination access and therefore certification) or educational progress or transition**. Also in order to facilitate validation, **documents should be provided as soon as possible after the completion of a learning programme**, and if relevant, in more than one language,

Policy

Where displaced students are integrating or reintegrating into education systems, **MoEs should develop clear policy guidance for the equivalency of curricula, programmes, examinations**, etc. Where possible, this should be done ahead of time (for example, at the time of repatriation). Such policy **guidance and procedures should be implemented down to local levels** to eliminate potentially exploitative, ad hoc decision-making by individual schools and authorities. It is also essential that these, and **policies and procedures for integration or reintegration should also be disseminated amongst refugee and IDP communities** to make their rights and opportunities clear.

Regional and cross-border policies and mechanisms, such as examination and syllabus boards and conventions, should be elaborated in conflict-affected and conflict-prone regions, to ensure a level of coherence and consistency for refugee and IDP populations on the move. In addition, explicit provision for refugees and IDPs should be explored and, where feasible and sustainable, supported with technical and financial assistance.

Including perspectives from refugee and IDP communities is vital in development of relevant policies and procedures. Therefore **refugee and IDP teachers and education experts should also be included in policy development related to accreditation and certification** and have opportunities to use existing experience and capacity and develop their own policy materials.

Capacity building

In order to facilitate planning and long- and short-term policy development, **technical and capacity building support should be provided as needed to MoEs supporting IDP and refugee children**. This will need to include a balance of inputs at the national, provincial and local levels. In addition, support from teachers' organizations and unions in host countries and from regional or international networks could complement inputs from MoEs, UN agencies and NGOs.

Tools and instruments such as 'certification supports,' grade conversion charts, syllabus comparisons, etc. should be developed to ensure smooth transition of students from and into different education systems across countries.

6.3 Conclusions

While not exhaustive, the above set of recommendations complements some of the more specific recommendations from the other contributors in *Section II* of this study. They provide a broad framework for policy and action. They are supported by the resource library which has now been established on this subject, accessible through the INEE website (see INEE, 2008). Increased attention to certification and its importance to students, teachers, parents and education authorities is required of all key actors, and especially donors, who may be called upon to finance technical and co-ordination activities such as cross-border visits, curriculum mapping exercises, assessment and examination process development. It is well documented that donor funding for education often dips after an initial emergency, with education programming falling into the gap between humanitarian assistance and long-term development programming (see International Save the Children Alliance, 2007). For this reason among others, the securing of formal recognition of learning achievement and the identification of certification possibilities are important policy issues which merit consideration from the outset of an emergency response, in the choice of curriculum, teaching and learning resources, and in the development of certification arrangements. As the case studies demonstrate, this is not only an 'emergency' issue: certification of learning also requires attention in protracted or chronic crisis situations and times of pre-return and reintegration, but these are precisely the moments in which education typically receives little attention and sparse external funding.

The voices of students, educators and education authorities presented in this study are testaments to the importance of certification. They call on us to learn from the examples documented, to use strategies of advocacy and co-ordination, technical assistance and capacity building, and to commit the necessary funds to fulfil the right to certification for displaced students as a key component of the right to education. As *Chapters 1* and *2* have shown, a number of global solutions have been suggested, such as a 'refugee passport' or a specific examination board for displaced persons. Yet the data collected and experiences shared do not fully support this approach, given the current diversification of learning opportunities through open learning, distance education programmes and regional and other networks of harmonized accreditation and certification. It is conceivable that a dedicated refugee or IDP accreditation and certification body would be counter-productive and fail to provide the levels of access resulting from support for students to enter 'mainstream' learning programmes, especially at post-primary levels. The recommendations presented above serve to encourage the development of contextually appropriate solutions and offer some technical guidance for enabling displaced students to enter and succeed in mainstream systems, whether of their home or a host country.

When refugee and displaced children and young people are denied education, they are denied opportunities for the sense of identity and belonging, and the other services and resources of the state which appropriate education can provide. They are especially aware of the limitations of education systems and certification processes which have no value beyond national borders and which operate in isolation from the systems and processes of other countries, particularly countries in the same region. In the longer term, donor support for education should encourage national curriculum, assessment, certification and validation development within regional and international frameworks which support cross-border equivalency, interoperability and mutual recognition and validation. This constitutes good practice in times of peace, and should also be a priority in times of crisis and reconstruction.

Section II
The case studies

Chapter 7
Confirming the past, assuring a future:
the devil is in the details

Barry Sesnan

7.1 Introduction

"Sudanese society requires certificates more than it requires education" (Sesnan, 1991).

In Africa, a young person often has a paramount need for an education certificate. To Western eyes a certificate may seem unimportant, but in most places the certificate confirms the past and may be the only key to the future. For example,

"It is much more important to be in the right place at the right time and to fill in the form correctly. Coaching and assistance in the process of application would have the greatest practical effect in university entry ..." (Sesnan, 1989).

In a country with organized and professional education, where no one doubts the good will or ability of others, young people move smoothly through the system. At each stage, others follow their progress, and if they have to change schools, they will receive the same standard of education in the new school as before. They may have little immediate need for examinations or printed certificates, except at key transition points. As long as they remain within the system, the record is there, continuous assessment works (and can be trusted) and can be used to improve their learning. For many children and young people in Africa and much of the developing world, however, this experience is as far removed from their reality as it is possible to get. Words such as 'trust,' 'care', possibly even 'good will' and, sadly, 'system' do not have much meaning when applied to their schooling.

If enforced urbanization or internal or cross-border displacement has occurred when an education system is set up or restored after an emergency, war or a major population movement, it is not long before the questions of assessment and certification arise. This may be for many reasons, including loss of certificates, inability to get hold of records or the need to identify the right entry point on a new education ladder. Some

way is needed to assess the quality and the 'quantity' of achievement and past learning. The demand for this assessment may come from the pupils, students or parents; it may also come from education authorities, education committees (official, or representing the affected community) or from a potential benefactor. Once assessment is possible, certification is usually needed. However, simply giving a certificate may not be sufficient if it is neither internationally recognized nor 'portable'. Even when an assessment and certification process is available, there are obstacles, bureaucratic, financial or otherwise, which can prevent the usually poor, and certainly powerless, candidates from being able to use it.

Money is a major consideration, and many if not most problems become less serious if there is some money available to solve problems of transport, the cost of identity documents or where to stay during the examination period. There are many other barriers. The Kenyan education system, for example, insists that everyone, foreigner or national, must study Swahili and take a Swahili paper in the examination. No exemptions are granted (Sesnan, 1992). The Sudan school system insists that pupils must be Muslim or Christian, but provides the Islamic paper only in Arabic, a language which most returnees do not know (Sesnan, 1992). Policies can be contradictory. Congolese refugees in Tanzania followed the Congolese curriculum with the blessing of their hosts, and links were maintained with the home province. However, the authorities in another part of the Republic of the Congo itself would not allow Sudanese refugees to follow their home curriculum (Sesnan, 1993).

This chapter presents an analysis of such practical details encountered by refugees, returnees or displaced students. Through the stories of individuals, I describe problems, discuss interventions and suggest a solution. The solution may be something which could have been done beforehand, at the time, or retroactively. I aim to show that 'the devil is in the details', that obstacles are not just at the policy level but also in the ordinary practical matters which absorb time, effort and money and require knowledge of the systems, all rare commodities for an ordinary, poor, displaced student. Space does not allow for coverage of the need for examinations or certification for specific subgroups – temporary teachers, workers or volunteers who got their training in exile or on the job; people, usually adults, studying alone, by correspondence or distance education; out-of-school youth; and older people (including those who need functional literacy).

7.2 Straight talk

There are a number of key issues to bear in mind when considering certification for refugee and displaced students.

- Education is often a pull factor in becoming a refugee (Sesnan, 1998).
- Being a refugee is a often a good way to get a second chance at education when you dropped out the first time around, at home. You may not even wish to show your last certificate.
- Certification is regarded by some as simply an attendance certificate, by others as proof that you actually learned something. We must continue to try to smuggle education into the certification process (Sesnan, 1991), so we should prefer a certificate that gives some details of the content learned.
- Cheating and forgery exist**.** That certificate photocopied and re-photocopied ten times is quite likely to be a forgery with a 'top' from one person and a 'bottom', with nice results, from another. Those who forge often benefit from others' lack of knowledge of the home conditions, and from a soft heart on the part of those prepared to suspend disbelief.
- Language, as both subject and medium of instruction, is an important issue. The language used in the examinations may even differ from the language used in learning. Unfortunately the issue is rarely simple. Refugees from Mozambique in Malawi in the early 1990s were not fleeing from the government but from the rebels; it was possible for the Mozambique government to supervise the education provided in the camps, and education could be in Portuguese. In contrast, the policy articulated in Dungu in the Republic of the Congo that only French education was allowed, when no one at all spoke French and there were no teachers, dictionaries or textbooks, was definitely going too far the other way (Oxfam Quebec/UNHCR, 2004).

7.3 Some stories

Mpaka and equivalence: the validation of existing qualifications

Mpaka is a Congolese student who did his secondary education in the Republic of the Congo; he had all his certificates and his achievement was at a good level. He was not even officially a refugee when he applied to a university in Uganda. The university refused to take him until Uganda's National Examinations Board issued an 'equivalence letter', a

long (and for the Board, revenue-raising) process which was repeated for every student applying from another country.

Equivalence means establishing what a certificate is worth in local terms. For formal certificates it is quite easy to do, and in many cases has already been done. The British Council used to have an excellent publication showing equivalences among all the certificates in the world (academic and some professional). They had useful annotations, pointing out, for instance, that a pass in English Language in the Sudan School Certificate cannot be recognized since the paper is set at such a low level.

Recognizing prior qualifications is often simply an administrative decision, which can be based on a letter from a competent authority or, in some cases a specific analysis used as a guideline such as *How to assess the educational standard of a refugee [from Sudan]* (Sesnan, 1992), which was widely used in East Africa.

Lesson learned:

Individual solutions, even when professionally supported, can be useful, but a pre-established institutional solution (so that each case does not become a new one) is better. Temporary or individual solutions may have repercussions in the future.

Severino just wanted to get to the University of Juba

In 2005, after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between north and Southern Sudan was signed, Severino and a large number of young Southern Sudanese who had been in Uganda and Kenya returned to Juba, without waiting for any formal repatriation. They were aiming to attend Juba University, believing it would be cheaper than the universities in East Africa. The Juba authorities collected their details and sent them off to Khartoum, where the University has had its offices since it left Juba in 1989. The 350 or so files were sent to Khartoum, then never heard of again.

Not much later, when the tripartite agreement (between UNHCR, the governments of Sudan and Kenya, but not, crucially, the government of Southern Sudan) was signed, it promised that qualifications obtained while in exile would be recognized in Sudan.

However, what this meant was not specified and not communicated to anyone in Sudan or in the neighbouring countries, thus plunging

hundreds of students, teachers and others qualified in exile into a year-long bureaucratic nightmare when they got to Juba, where the agreement had never been seen, discussed or explained by anyone. In the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, because no provision had been made for changing the education bureaucracy or for creating special exemptions, each individual student had to make up an individual file. To do this they also had to get a nationality certificate, which fortunately was fairly easily obtained. It took just a few days and a small amount of money (though that rapidly inflated). They were not asked to obtain equivalence letters.

The result was that no student in either of these groups succeeded in getting into University within one year of their return. Most eventually gave up and went back to where they were already studying.

Lesson learned:

What went wrong? What could have been done better? Whose responsibility was it? All the fundamental principles of consultation and participation were broken. The refugees were never consulted, nor were the bureaucrats in Sudan. People who had experience were never asked what had happened before, though this was not the first time it had happened. There was no follow-up. What was needed was a specific 'act' by the government in Sudan, which could be a decree, for example, or simply a changing of the wording to a clearer statement such as 'XX qualifications are hereby automatically recognized'.

Students are not allowed to take the examination in rebel areas

In several countries when civil wars have broken out, the national examinations authority has cut off the rebel areas from their national examination systems and prevented movement of papers and examiners. Students naturally do not want a 'rebel' examination certificate, so the rebel authorities usually have to consider linking them back into the national system. In Côte d'Ivoire, because there was relatively free movement of people, older students moved out of the rebel areas to sit the examinations elsewhere. In a similar way, students in Southern Sudan moved to the government-held towns if they could not go to a neighbouring country. Today many students in the former government-held towns prefer to take Khartoum's examination in Arabic, since it takes less time, is considered easier and the certificate provided makes university entry easier. In the Republic of the Congo, eventually the examinations were allowed in the rebel-held areas, but there was no official way to move the answer papers

or the examiners to Kinshasa for marking. In this case, the head of the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance took it upon himself to lobby for the students. Two years into the crisis, a special exemption to the movement restrictions was created and the examinations and some examiners could move to Kinshasa (Sesnan, 1999, 2005).

Lesson learned:

Most importantly, the main stakeholders are the students and they will make the key decisions if they have enough information. Good will and (in the the Republic of the Congo) the intervention of an individual (working, of course, with a good understanding of the students' interests) were crucial. The system may be broken, but sometimes a specific actor (individual, lobbying group or other) can fix it.

Samuel's papers were torn up: a failure of the duty of care

In the early 1990s a small window of opportunity arose and suddenly, with little warning, around 3,000 young people who had been trapped in Juba for years were allowed to get out and fly home to Uganda. Everyone knew that there were many Sudanese among the 'Ugandans'. Many were my own former students. As they made their way into the airport in Juba to get on the World Food Programme cargo planes, the state security men stopped them, opened up their bags and removed all their documents. Then they tore them up, saying, "You will not need Sudanese documents where you are going." The students, of course, did need them – to establish their place on the educational ladder.

Samuel arrived on the first flight and told me about this. We went immediately to UNHCR in Kampala and asked them to radio UNHCR in Juba to tell them to collect all the refugees' documents before they went to the airport and send them separately in a diplomatic bag. However, UNHCR Juba refused to do this, thus setting 3,000 people back at least a year in their education.

Lesson learned:

One unexpected event required a swift solution, and someone with authority to make it happen.

Mongalla in Dungu: finding an examination to take and a way to get the candidates and the examination to the same place

In 1993 I visited the refugee settlement in Dungu, deep in the forests of northern Congo (then Zaire). I found that due to rules imposed by

the UNHCR education officer (and, possibly, by the authorities, though there was such chaos at the time, it was difficult to tell), schooling was supposed to follow the Congolese system and to take place in French, a language totally new to the Sudanese students. Because of this, Mongalla and his fellow teenage refugees had set up an English-medium self-help secondary school which they called the Cambridge School, where students were working towards what they believed to be the best available examination, the Cambridge Overseas Paper.

Unfortunately, they had no access to the outside world and thus no way of judging what would be most useful for them. Neither students nor volunteer teachers knew anything about the syllabus or the examination or had ever seen any past papers, with the result that they had registered for very inappropriate combinations of subjects and had no idea of the style of the examination questions, which were very different from anything they had seen before. The results were miserably poor. No one passed. Eventually many of them trekked to Uganda and joined schools there.

Lesson learned:

Though the refugees made extraordinary efforts to take the examination they wanted, the information they needed to make the correct choice of subjects was not available. The teachers did not have expertise to prepare for the examination. Their efforts might have been better directed if they had had better advice.

Said and Kowa, the lorry drivers and the passport

In Khartoum in the late 1980s, the Catholic evening schools were full of displaced southerners and, even then, Darfuris. In collaboration with the Catholic Church and Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), the Sudan Open Learning Unit further developed its Foundation[5] course to enable the growing displaced population - many of them almost illiterate adult labourers – to catch up rapidly. The course covered both academic and non-academic content.

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5. There is a small error in the JRS publication (2005) on this point. The Foundation course was created within the Sudan Open Learning Unit substantially before the church started using it. This is not to diminish the fact that there was excellent co-operation on the use and development of the course, for which the late Fr Ed Brady SJ must take the lion's share of credit.

Because the displaced students were continually being re-displaced, the Foundation course was developed as a modular programme, using a grid as follows:

Table 7.1   'Passport' used by students in the Sudan Open Learning Programme

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Test **	R Unit	Test 2
Maths								
English	Exempt (Exemption was by test. Students could also do only one subject if they wished.)							
Arabic								
Science								

This information was held in the Sudan Open Learning Unit central records, but each student kept a copy in the form of a booklet which we called the 'passport' and which was stamped and signed each time a module was completed. Students like Said and Kowa, who were lorry drivers, could study, do their tests and collect their next modules at any centre from Khartoum to Port Sudan (Sesnan, 1991).

Lesson learned:

A modular design, flexible system and giving control to the student, all of which are elements of distance education, can be of great help.

Taban and Keji needed diagnostic tests to know their standard and a special catch-up Class Zero

Like Mongalla in Dungu, Taban and Keji, arriving in Uganda in the early 1990s, found that the school and the examination system were different from what they had left. In particular, the Ugandan secondary school examination had a much larger number of subjects, and science was taught and tested through practical examinations. Such practicals did not exist in their home system.

Taban, Keji and others chose their own level of entry into Ugandan schools, based on their former level. Their teachers reported that students usually chose a level well above their real ability; there are many reasons for this, including the fact that they had had long gaps in their education, promotion in Sudan had been automatic, and the level of education was genuinely lower. The Education Programme for Sudanese Refugees (EPSR) then conducted mass diagnostic tests for around 5,000 refugees

in Uganda on behalf of the Ugandan government, revealing that many lower secondary students would be better off returning to the last class of primary school. The fact that students were too old to be kept in primary school led to the creation of a 'Class Zero' in the self-help secondary school, which concentrated on remedial teaching and on preparing the students for the first year of secondary school. At a later stage, in the long vacation, the first batch of candidates for the examination class also received a special month of coaching, conducted by volunteers from Makerere University's branch of World University Service.

Lesson learned:

In their own best interest students may need to be shown, by diagnostic testing, where they stand academically. If this is lower than they should be at, special provision should be made for them to adapt to the new system.

Okot and Mary had to change language of instruction

In the early eighties, in Juba Day Secondary School, we were faced with the problem of a large intake of students who knew no English into an English-medium school. Solutions involved diagnostic testing and streaming in the first year, rather than a Class Zero. Those students who came from Arabic-medium schools, like Okot and May, were given a straightforward English test. If they fell below a certain level they attended a different stream for the first term. Here they were taught intensive English, then they were gradually eased into the mainstream classes, sometimes even subject by subject (usually mathematics first).

Lesson learned:

A specific conversion course can be of value to ensure students are able to back on track as quickly as possible so they can take the examination they need.

Ubax and Farax learn about examinations

There are at least four recent examples of booklets written for volunteer teachers on how to write and conduct tests and examinations. These booklets, which explain the rules and the hidden assumptions of an education and examination system, were provided in Zambia by the Spark project (UNICEF and the government of Zambia), the Republic of the Congo (Le Bon Enseignant) and Somalia ('*How to know what the children have learned*', UNESCO-PEER). EPSR in Uganda in the

early 1990s wrote a booklet for UNHCR to distribute to refugee students, partly to show the refugees that Uganda's education system had changed a lot from the 'East African' system their elders knew in the 1960s.

Examination technique is a specific skill. A mock examination, where students sit a practice examination replicating all the conditions and the level of the real examination, can have crucial importance. This is where an independent candidate may well lose out. The Africa Educational Trust in Somaliland provides a mock examination and also issues candidates with an attractive and very detailed booklet about study techniques (such as studying in groups) and how to answer each type of question. It covers, for example, the difference between the instructions 'compare and contrast' and 'describe'.

Lesson learned:

Taking the mock not only gives practice with questions in the form of the final examination, but also feedback to students about their strengths and weaknesses. In the Dungu scenario above, many candidates were shocked to discover that not only the layout of the examination but also the wording of the questions was very different from what they expected. They were unable to answer efficiently and were directly disadvantaged compared to well-prepared students in competitive examinations.

7.4 Recommendations

Perhaps the most important recommendation emerging from experience, is to be proactive and imaginative in solving a particular problem in the short term, but also advocate for further research and policy change for longer-term solutions.

A.   *See the situation from the students' point of view*

It is important to **remember that the main stakeholders are the displaced students themselves**, and they can make the main decisions if they have enough information. They will have thought out many solutions to problems already. Therefore listening to the students and understanding how they view their problems is essential, as is understanding that they may view getting a certificate, as more important than an education. In taking a learner's perspective however, one has to remember that displaced students may not understand their own level, or how the new system works – so guidance will be necessary in many cases.

B.   *Identify the problems*

By identifying the problems, we start to find solutions. Therefore it is necessary to first **identify which problems come from a policy, from practice, from a lack of information, from a lack of authority, from a lack of goodwill or failure of duty of care**. Often the first major problem may be money, and it is necessary to accept that fact. If money (for application forms, or photographs, for example) is a solution, then **provide cash grants**. Remember that boys may sometimes find work to get money but girls may find it much more difficult.

As it is rare that these problems have not been encountered before, it is important to **include and consult key players, like bureaucrats**, who may be willing to help but may lack information. They may have experience which can be valuable.

C.   *Practical actions*

There are a number of practical steps that can be taken which need to be identifed, described and then publicized. For example, **students may need to be shown, by diagnostic testing**, **where they stand academically**. They may need special provision, such as extra classes or a conversion course, to adapt to a new system. It is critical to describe from the outset what this provision is.

If there are obstacles to registering for examinations, these can be eased by stocking application forms, and helping students to obtain identity documents, or by persuading friendly schools to act as examination centres and to accept displaced students prior to the examination.

Preparing students for the examinations and supporting them through the process is a concrete mechanism of support. This can be achieved, for example, by providing mock examinations, telling them about examination techniques and publishing past papers, and then accompanying students through the examination process. It is also important to follow up afterwards until the certificate is issued.

The support required for an effective process, is not limited to students. Therefore, it is essential to **support the teachers with training on unfamiliar syllabi and examination formats or on examination preparation for displaced students**. This implies ensuring training is followed up with professional support such as

workshops, analysis of past papers and the expectations of the new examination system.

D. *Guaranteeing appropriate support*

It is essential that **mechanisms are in place to cover the duty of care for displaced students with regards to certification**, and that information, support, advice and follow-up is provided during examination and other such processes. A physical space such as a small drop-in reference centre with manuals and pamphlets and a professionally-run interactive website where all necessary information can be found, including syllabuses, regulations, past examination papers and downloadable application forms, is preferable. Such a website should be a point of reference on the reliability of schools, institutes and courses advertising themselves on line. Students should also be able to assess their own levels in the centre or online.

In order to apply appropriate certification mechanisms, education co-ordination actors, including any Education Cluster that is established, should identify when a specific certification-related action, such as legislation, or a new certification solution needs to take place, and work to make it happen. When necessary, these education actors should **lobby relevant authorities and provide technical support for examination flexibility to benefit displaced and 'regular' students**: for example, more flexible times, more locations, modular approaches or more options (such as different examination boards, special subjects, languages or the possibility of doing single subjects). They also need to be attentive to the needs of teachers of refugees or displaced people, and support their efforts to achieve cross-border recognition of teacher training qualifications.

Afghan refugee students in Pakistan: certification challenges and solutions

International Rescue Committee, Pakistan

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on an IRC case study on certification conducted in 2005, which has been updated to include current (2008) perspectives and issues for the future. Analysis is based on internal IRC documents and semi-structured interviews with staff involved in student certification.[6] This chapter offers a history of the certification of refugee learning in Pakistan, from the standpoint of IRC experience, from the early 1990s to the present. It documents the key steps taken and identifies some of the lessons learned. After a brief description of the background and IRC programming, especially in education, it documents IRC experience and ends with current perspectives and thoughts for the future.

The Afghan refugee crisis began in 1978, when a violent regime change quickly escalated into an international, geopolitical crisis. In 1979 the Soviet Union invaded, sending a massive influx of Afghan refugees to neighbouring Pakistan. Resistance in Afghanistan to the Soviets continued throughout the 1980s, devastating the economy and leaving refugees struggling to survive in Pakistan, unable to return to their homes. Voluntary repatriation took place in the early 1990s. In 1996 the Taliban came to power, sending yet another wave of refugees into Pakistan. The US-led invasion in 2001 complicated the crisis as new refugees fled across Afghanistan's borders.

Substantial voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan with the aid of the UNHCR resumed in 2002 despite continuing political and economic instability. After the initial large-scale return, however, repatriation has

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6.   Rebecca Winthrop led IRC's internal case studies on certification. For the Pakistan-Afghanistan case study, special thanks go to Leah Sultan-Khan, who conducted the research and wrote the study in 2005. Jackie Kirk revised and updated the study for publication here. Much appreciation goes to the IRC education teams in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Stephanie Buckland, Sheri Ritsema and Jennifer Sklar also provided invaluable input.

slowed. The first ever census of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, conducted by Pakistan's Ministry of States and Frontier Regions and UNHCR, which took place in September 2005, estimated there were three million Afghans living in Pakistan. The tripartite agreement signed by the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR envisioned the voluntary repatriation of all Afghan refugees by December 2006, the date the agreement was due to expire. However, by the end of January 2007, in a massive registration effort, the Pakistan government registered 2.16 million Afghans out of an estimated 2.4 million still in the country. Some 84 per cent were unwilling to return, nearly 42 per cent citing security as the primary reason and 24 per cent citing lack of jobs in Afghanistan (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2007). In addition, food security, lack of quality education and other basic services, personal freedom, basic human rights, employment opportunities, existence of land mines and ethnic tensions all make refugees hesitant to return to their homeland. There is clearly a continuing need to support refugees in Pakistan and to support the host communities which have been particularly affected by them, especially in the North West Frontier Province.

There is some cultural resistance to girls' education, particularly amongst illiterate refugee families. However, many of the refugees fled the harsh, anti-education regime of the Taliban; many Afghans in Pakistan value education and see it as the key to their children's future, whatever that may hold. Pakistan government policy and a desire for eventual return to Afghanistan shape the educational options of the refugee population. Pakistan's education system is quite different from that of Afghanistan, and many refugee students study the Afghan curriculum, in Dari or Pashto. Precise numbers are not available, but it is known that some Afghans attend Pakistani government schools clandestinely; few can afford the fees for private schools. The refugee census in 2005 estimated that more than one million refugee children have no access to education.

8.2 International Rescue Committee's refugee education programme

IRC has continued to provide education in IRC-supported schools for Afghan refugees, with a particular focus on girls and women since the early 1990s. IRC responded to desperate pleas for support from existing refugee schools which no longer had the funds to maintain their programmes at an adequate standard. These included schools opened

in the early 1990s to accommodate newly arrived urban refugees, for whom the education of girls was a priority. IRC offered support, with the condition of a minimum of 50 per cent enrolment of girls. IRC-supported schools continue to provide primary education for refugee boys and girls and secondary education (Grades 7 to 12) for girls. Home schools were established in more remote and/or conservative areas where there were not enough students to form a school or girls were not allowed to walk outside their neighbourhoods. These were held in the home of a community member, following the same curriculum as refugee schools. IRC-supported schools used the curriculum of the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan, promoting learning and literacy acquisition in the children's first language, Dari or Pashto. Since 2002, IRC education staff have made particular efforts to gain endorsement of the programme and certification of the students' and teachers' learning in order to harmonize education in exile with education in the home country and to facilitate return and reintegration into education in Afghanistan.

Despite the repatriation of over 2.6 million Afghan refugees from Pakistan by November 2007, the enrolment figures in IRC-supported schools did not reduce proportionately, indicating a need to continue to support education for refugees; this was confirmed by the slow rate of return in 2006 and 2007.

IRC currently (2008) supports 22 schools in North West Frontier Province, with a total of 11,500 students – including 8,101 girls – and 352 teachers, most of whom are women. At the height of the programme in 2001/2002, after the US-led military operations in Afghanistan, IRC-supported schools enrolled 26,000 students and hired 1,000 teachers. At that time, there were 38 regular schools and 37 home-based schools. To support the expansion of the programme and massive expansion of access to education, particularly for girls, much emphasis was placed on teacher training. To meet the needs of girls particularly, and to build the capacity of women who had been denied education and career development in Afghanistan, women were recruited to the programme without prior teaching experience; it is estimated that only about 60 per cent of the initial teaching force had previously been teachers. With time, IRC could also rely on a cohort of Grade 12 female graduates, some of whom would be keen to train as teachers for the IRC-supported schools. Many of the students enrolled in IRC-supported schools in the early years of the programme represent the first generation to become literate, particularly in Baluchistan.

8.3 Facilitating repatriation through refugee education

As repatriation began in 2002, IRC received anecdotal accounts of problems for students and teachers reintegrating back to Afghanistan. Programme staff realized that there was no mechanism to recognize IRC's secondary school certificate, so the education co-ordinator approached the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar (Pakistan) for guidance and the establishment of official procedures for validation. The MoE in Afghanistan subsequently drafted guidelines for the Afghan Consulate to follow, with the agreement that an Afghan Consulate stamp on the students' school certificates from schools registered with the Consulate would facilitate recognition in Afghanistan. All students take examinations at the end of the year and all teachers in IRC-supported schools receive certificates. IRC was the first of the NGOs supporting refugee education to achieve this official certification. It set a precedent and motivated other organizations to register their schools. Parents clearly preferred to send their children to the schools with the official certification because they knew that their children could then repatriate and reintegrate into schooling.

At this time IRC was operating in Afghanistan under IRC Pakistan, but at the end of September 2002, IRC Pakistan split into two separate country programmes. IRC education staff in Pakistan and Afghanistan continued to collaborate on cross-border training and co-ordination activities. A 'reintegration unit' was established within the IRC Afghanistan office in Kabul to support the successful return of both teachers and students into the Afghanistan education system and to ensure that students were able to transfer as soon as possible into the appropriate level of school. The unit also facilitated the exchange of curriculum and teacher training materials developed in Pakistan, an important resource for the new Afghan education system. IRC Afghanistan staff members, who had themselves repatriated from positions within IRC Pakistan, worked with the MoE to adapt the materials and integrate them into the Afghan curricula. The unit was well placed to share information about the expertise Afghan refugees had developed in exile and to leverage this for the development of Afghanistan's education system. It could also gather and communicate to Pakistan information on policy and programme developments in education in Afghanistan, to keep the refugee education programme as up to date as possible.

8.4 Refugee school and student registration

The successful registration of the IRC-supported schools with the MoE, through the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar, has guaranteed placement at the appropriate grade level inside Afghanistan for all repatriating students. Since IRC formalized the relationship with the Afghan MoE, there have been no reported students from IRC-supported schools having difficulties in assignment to the appropriate grade level inside Afghanistan. After the initial registration, the IRC-supported schools began to use official transfer sheets from the MoE in Afghanistan, thus making it possible for the end of year examination results of all students to be processed by the Afghan Consulate and sent to the MoE in Kabul. Registered schools can provide students preparing for repatriation with an endorsed, stamped transfer letter to take with them to the education authorities when they arrive in Afghanistan. All IRC-supported schools inform students and their families about the paperwork required and where to go to register for schools inside Afghanistan. The MoE maintains some oversight of the quality of education in the schools through visits from its representatives from the Afghan Consulate.

Initially, it was the IRC education programme Field Manager, Ms. Mansuura, who was the focal point for the registration process. She gathered forms from the Afghan Consulate, distributed them to schools and met with all principals and headmasters to explain what they were and how to complete them. These were then submitted to the Afghan Consulate education focal point.

The IRC-supported schools were the first refugee schools in Pakistan to use the officially endorsed Afghan curriculum and to be formally recognized by the Afghan MoE. The procedures were not difficult, although a substantial amount of paperwork was required. IRC staff knowledge of the system and of this paperwork meant that in 2003 and 2004, when camps were closed and there was a rush for certification and verification paperwork at the Afghan Consulate, the IRC-supported schools, all of which were already registered, were not affected. Good relationships with the Afghan Consulate and staff understandings of the registration processes also paved the way for the registration of three new IRC-supported schools in Baluchistan. IRC staff in North West Frontier Province shared the guidelines with their counterparts in the IRC Quetta office, and once completed in the schools, the forms were taken to the

Afghan Consulate in Quetta. This meant that the registration of three schools in Baluchistan took place in less than one week.

8.5 Curriculum

The curriculum used in the IRC-supported schools did not have to change significantly to be accepted by the MoE in Afghanistan; small changes were made to bring it up to date with new policy in Afghanistan. IRC staff made efforts to communicate these changes, and the need for them, to the teachers and school administrators. IRC had already adopted the MoE-approved curriculum, developed in the mid-1980s with support from the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) under a USAID grant within a few years of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, towards the end of the Cold War. This curriculum was quickly purged of particularly violent content and then adopted by the new MoE in Afghanistan to support the massive 'Back to School' campaign of March 2002 (Spink, 2005). Although educators did have concerns about the large-scale printing and distribution of the UNO textbooks, it was understood that the new MoE had an immediate need for a standard set of materials. IRC's commitment to the lead role of the MoE in defining curriculum and its efforts to update the refugee curriculum to fit with the MoE have been appreciated by the Consulate.

8.6 Factors contributing to successful certification of refugee learning

The IRC Reintegration Unit harmonized refugee education in Pakistan with reconstruction efforts inside Afghanistan, thus facilitating the return for teachers and students. A common database was established to track the repatriation of teachers and students between the two country programmes. Links were also strengthened between IRC Afghanistan and IRC Pakistan and the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar and MoE in Kabul. IRC Afghanistan's close relationship with the new Afghan government and the MoE in particular meant that it could sustain communication with the Deputy Minister regarding registration, certification, return and reintegration.

As the new MoE was established in Kabul and began to develop its own policy framework, IRC-supported schools made every effort to follow these developments and to adopt new guidelines, official curriculum and directives issued from Afghanistan. Student and teacher training curricula in all subjects continue to be updated with every new

edict. This was appreciated by, and to some extent also facilitated by, the education focal point in the Consulate in Peshawar.

IRC staff members maintain close dialogue with the MoE representatives in the Consulate, involving them whenever possible in school-related events, activities and concerns. There have inevitably been some delays and frustrations, for example in the backlog of school graduation diplomas, but cordial relations have been maintained. This meant, for example, that when in 2007 the Consulate began to demand high fees from the schools registered with them, IRC was able to negotiate a waiver on behalf of the schools it supports.

8.7 For the future: issues for development

One certification difficulty encountered by IRC is that of the early home-based schools. These schools, initially established to provide basic education for otherwise excluded girls, only went up to Grade 4. IRC therefore could not issue a formal certificate, because such graduation certificates are only granted when a student completes Grade 6 and Grade 12. The home-based schools were gradually phased out by 2004, but this experience prompts a key recommendation for future certification efforts: arrangements should be made with the authorities to provide some formal recognition of learning even if the student does not complete a full cycle of education at one time. This would encourage continuation of learning and eventual cycle completion elsewhere.

The situation for refugees still in Pakistan remains highly uncertain; the longer that families remain, awaiting better security and economic conditions in Afghanistan, the more questions are raised about the relevance of an education that prepares them to return. The curriculum taught in the refugee schools is not aligned with the Pakistani curriculum, nor is it endorsed by the Pakistani education authorities. Certificates of graduating students' learning achievements are not recognized by Pakistani schools, institutes, universities or bodies of higher education. Private institutions may accept these certificates, but demand high fees out of the reach of most refugees. This means that graduates are only qualified to sit the stringent entry exams and apply for the few available places in Kabul University or other Afghan universities. Pakistan government policy and the reluctance of refugees and refugee educators to jeopardize recognition of learning by the MoE in Afghanistan means that although the need for better harmonization with the Pakistani education system is acknowledged, only small steps have been taken in this direction.

There is clearly a need to expand the opportunities for refugee youth, to provide education at primary and secondary levels which can give access to further learning and livelihood opportunities in either Pakistan or Afghanistan and prepare them for a wide range of possible futures. The realities of this remain problematic. Would the inclusion of Urdu language in the refugee schools mean that certification by the MoE in Afghanistan was refused? What curriculum changes would have to be made – and would these be acceptable by the MoE in Afghanistan – to align the curriculum with that of Pakistani primary and secondary education? Could an English-language education solve some of the problems of the language of instruction? Would it be acceptable by both authorities? These are among the tricky questions now under discussion. Through an innovative early childhood education programme initiated in 2007 which benefits both refugee and host communities, IRC has been developing closer relations with the education authorities in North West Frontier Province (IRC, 2006). Because of these relationships and a new interest in the nature and quality of IRC's education approaches, opportunities for dialogue on refugee education with the relevant Pakistan authorities are now opening up. It is hoped that in the future joint pilot projects may be initiated.

As IRC Afghanistan's education programme has developed with an increasing focus on alignment with and support for the MoE, the vision for return and reintegration support has evolved. IRC is aware of the MoE's need to better manage the return and reintegration of students and teachers, and particularly the need for technical support for the co-ordination of the departments and levels involved and technical initiatives related to validation and placement. Rather than supporting an internal IRC reintegration unit, since 2007 IRC Pakistan, with the financial support of the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and the management and supervisory support of IRC Afghanistan, has supported a seconded staff person in the MoE, working on a reintegration desk (IRC, 2007).

8.8 Conclusions

This chapter has summarized the history of IRC Pakistan's work for the formal certification of refugees' learning to demonstrate the importance of early efforts to register refugee schools with the authorities in the country of origin. The IRC experience indicates that NGOs should reach out to the authorities to ensure that their support

for education can have long-term benefits and is oriented to seamless return and reintegration. At the same time, the case study also shows the need for more reflection and programme development to respond to evolving political, economic and social conditions for the refugees and in the country of origin. The longer the refugees remain in Pakistan, the more education only for return becomes less relevant, and the more its meaning changes from that of the initial crisis period.

Chapter 9

Accreditation, certification and legitimacy: education for refugee and migrant students on the Thai-Burmese border

Olloriak Sawade

9.1 Introduction

"If I could be any animal I would be a bird so that I can fly all over the world and not need a passport" (Student in Umpium Refugee Camp).[7]

Saw Jule was born in a small community in Karen State along the eastern border of Myanmar. A couple of times a year he and his family would have to escape to the jungle around his village to seek refuge from Myanmar's military who came to the village to find people for forced labour. Since they were away from their village for long periods, most of Saw Jule's schooling took place under the trees in the jungle, where he and his fellow students rarely had access to materials such as pencils and paper. In 1997, when he was 11, the attack on his village was worse than ever before. Most of the village was burned and the soldiers remained in the village area. Saw Jule's family and community had to stay hidden for months in the jungle and eventually ran out of food. In order to survive, over a hundred people from the village walked for days to the Thai border. Eventually Saw Jule and his family were allowed to stay in one of the refugee camps in Thailand and he was able to start school (S. Jule, interview, 4 April 2007).

Saw Jule is now 21 and has completed secondary school and two post-secondary programmes in the camps. Along with thousands of other young people along the border, he dreams of attending university. However, although his educational certificates are valued in the refugee community in which they were issued, none are recognized by a nation state, including Thailand and Myanmar. An overarching policy question is: What can be done to assist the thousands of youth along the Thai-

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7.   Some names of interviewees have been changed or omitted for their protection.

Burmese border to acquire an education which they and their refugee community value, and which will enable them to seek the university education and jobs they desire outside?

This chapter begins with a brief description of the historical, political and legal situation of people from Myanmar living in Thailand. Secondly, it examines the educational and certification situation of these refugees and migrants.[8] Finally, it analyses the strengths and limitations of the educational certification possibilities for the young people of these communities.[9]

9.2 The context

Myanmar is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the region, with over one hundred languages spoken (Smith, 2002). The eight major ethnic groups are the Burmans, the Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah (Karenni), Mon, Rakhine (Arakan) and Shan. After Burma's independence from the British on 4 January 1948, groups such as the Communist Party and the People's Volunteer Organization took up arms to seek governmental power. The Karen State recruited an army and demanded sovereignty from the Burman-dominated government. The Shan, Mon and Karenni soon followed in creating armies to fight for their own sovereignty. This situation allowed the central military to gradually obtain more power and by March 1962 the military successfully took over the Burmese government.

With the military in control, new laws were established nationalizing all schools, with a ban on the teaching of all ethnic languages except Burmese (Lwin, 2003). Targeted, brutal attacks were carried out on the ethnic groups along Myanmar's eastern border (Smith, 2002) with the hardest-hit areas in the Karen State. Over 40 years later, Myanmar's military government, currently called the State Peace and Development Council, still remains in power. The government military continues to burn villages, impose hard labour without wages, rape, pillage, attack schools and relocate villages (Human Rights Watch, 24 April 2007).

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8.   Refugees from Burma living outside the designated refugee camps in Thailand, and not registered with the Thai officials, are considered by Thai officials as illegal migrants, not as legal refugees.
9.   This research would not have been possible without the assistance of both ZOA Refugee Care and World Education Thailand (formerly known as World Education Consortium).

Map 9.1   Myanmar and Thailand border
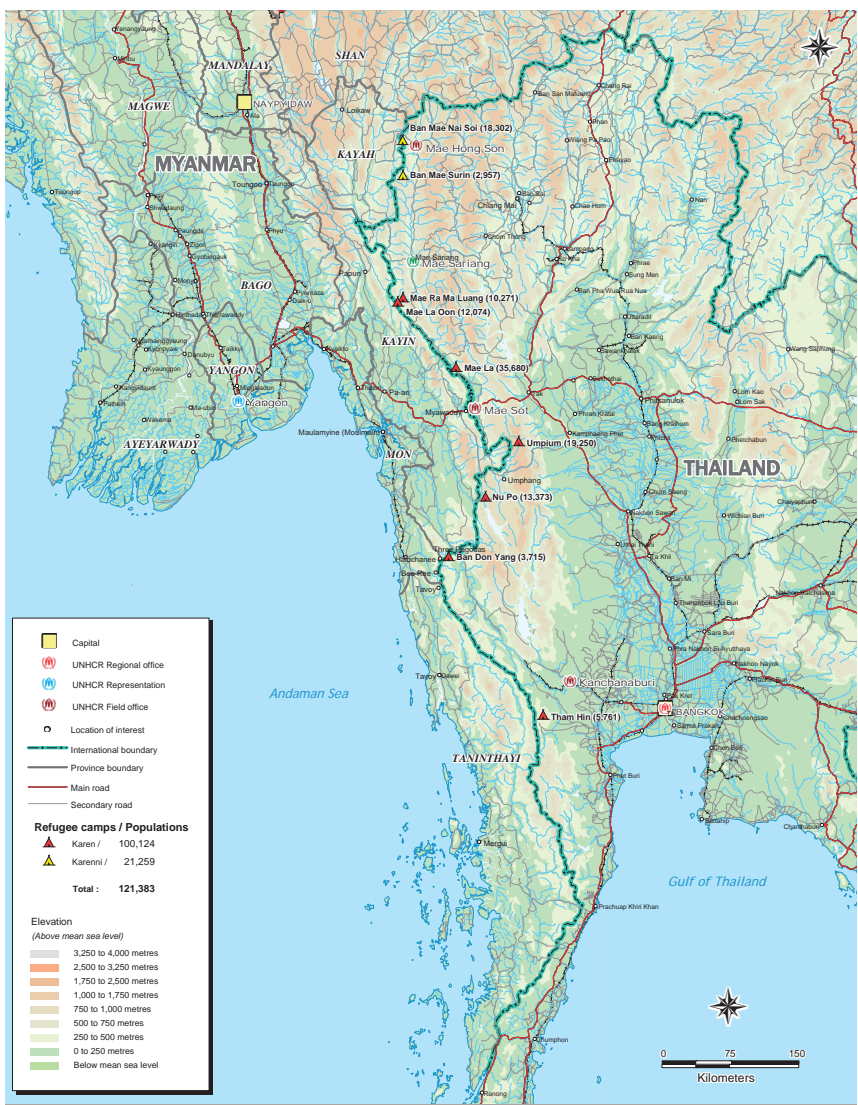
Source: UNHCR, 2008.

Large numbers of Karen fled into Thailand in January 1984 when the scale of the attacks on the Karen State increased substantially (TBBC, 2004). In February 1984 the Thai Ministry of the Interior requested emergency assistance from the aid agencies then working with the Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese populations in Thailand, to assist the refugees who had set up small villages along the border (TBBC, 2004) and were in desperate need of food and medical supplies.[10]

In 1995 as the result of a split in the Karen National Union and fighting between it and the newly formed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, even more refugees fled to Thailand. The warfare, however, was not confined to Myanmar, and the Karen communities in Thailand were also attacked. The Royal Thai Government therefore relocated many Karen settlements and brought in the Thai military to guard the areas. Although this has protected the lives of the refugees, it has also created what refugees describe as a prison-like community, as the refugees in the camps are not permitted to leave freely; any who do leave are considered illegal migrants in Thailand. Young people seem to be the hardest hit and boredom in the camps leads to early pregnancies, drugs and violence. Many complained of the frustration of not knowing what their future might bring. Many have spent decades in the camps without the ability to be self-reliant, having no legal access to jobs and education outside.

There are estimated to be more than 500,000 IDPs in eastern Myanmar. Over 200,000 Burmese refugees live outside the camps in Thailand and over two million migrant workers from Myanmar are living in Thailand (TBBC, 2006). There are two official Karenni refugee camps in the Northern Province of Mae Hong Son and seven official camps dominated by Karen located further south along the border. UNHCR had registered a total of 130,435 refugees by the end of 2007 (TBBC, December 2007).

This study investigated the educational opportunities for Burmese youth living in the camps and outside of the camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border, with particular attention to the issues of accreditation and certification of learning.

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10.   The Royal Thai Government has maintained a generous asylum policy although it is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

9.3 Education for migrant and refugee children

It is estimated that three million children do not attend school in Myanmar (Lwin, 2003). This is due in part to cost of school fees, forced labour by the government and the lack of schools. The Karen Human Rights Group reports that the State Peace and Development Council government targets schools, with soldiers "restricting the expansion of educational facilities, prohibiting instruction in Karen language, confiscating school materials provided independently of State Peace and Development Council channels and destroying schools as part of the army's mass relocation campaigns" (Karen Human Rights Group, 2007: 76). For many Burmese, flight to Thailand brings more educational opportunities.

The Karen State had an educational department established before Myanmar's independence and it continues to support teachers and students inside Myanmar as best it can, as well as many refugee and migrant schools in Thailand. In exile in Thailand, the Karen Education Department (KED) recognizes that it is viewed as a community-based organization. However, the members view themselves more as an MoE of a government in exile (KED staff, interview, 28 March 2007). The Karenni Educational Department (KnED) does not have as long a history; however, it is responsible for Karenni education in two of the northern refugee camps.

The first schools for children in the refugee camps and migrant areas used ad hoc curricula pieced together from the old British curriculum, the Burmese curriculum and a mix of Australian and American curricula brought in by expatriate volunteers who came to assist along the border (KED staff, interview, 28 March 2007). In 1994, the Royal Thai Government first allowed NGOs to assist the refugee groups in the sectors of education and sanitation. There are now three main international NGOs working on education along the border. Supporting the operation of schools, curriculum and teacher training, ZOA Refugee Care works primarily in the seven Karen camps, while Jesuit Refugee Care (JRC) works in the two Karenni camps. World Education Thailand concentrates on migrant education and supports teacher training in the refugee camps.

Migrant education depends on both geography and ethnicity. The Karen from Myanmar, for example, are closely related to Thai Karen groups, thus easing the integration of children into local schools in areas

of high concentration of Thai Karen. In and around Mae Sot, where there are few such communities, some Karen migrant communities have established their own schools and nominated community members as teachers. The migrant schools range from the very well funded to children studying under a tree with no materials at all (T. Naing, interview, 27 May 2007). Other ethnic groups such as the Shan (around Chiang Mai), the Karenni (around Mae Hong Song) and the Mon (in the more southern area of the border) have established some schools to teach English and computer use to youth and adults.

The strongest migrant network is the Burma Migrant Working Education Committee (BMWEC). Naw Paw Ray, chairperson of BMWEC since 2004, reported that through the support of foreign donors, BMWEC is able to provide migrant students with a level of education she is "very proud of" (interview, 20 March 2007). In recent years, experienced teachers, as well as computers and some musical instruments, have been made available. Naw Paw Ray said that her biggest fear for the BMWEC schools is security, as migrant schools can be destroyed at any moment by Thai officials (interview, 20 March 2007). There are recent moves from the provincial education authorities to register and provide some support and recognition of the migrant schools, yet the fact that the migrant communities themselves are considered illegal in Thailand means the situation is precarious, with continued security concerns. Only a handful of migrants have been issued with official travel documents and work permits out of the approximately two million migrants from Myanmar in Thailand (Migrant Assistance Programme Foundation, 2006: 36).

Recent Royal Thai Government policy developments have enshrined the right of migrant children to attend Thai schools, and there are now over 50,000 migrant students enrolled in state schools and able to obtain Thai educational certificates (statistic from the Deputy Secretary, office of the Basic Education Commission Manthana Sangkhagan at the conference on 11 and 12 May 2007 at Chulalongkorn University). For many migrants, however, the Thai language is a serious barrier, especially for those children who migrated when older and whose priority is finding work (teacher in Chiang Mai, interview, 25 May 2007). Despite the legal right, there are still many gaps and inconsistencies; for instance, although Thai schools allow children to attend until Grade 10, many do not allow students without Thai citizenship to attend Grades 11 and 12, as these grades are not considered a right by the Thai constitution (migrant student in Mae Hong Song, interview, 22 May 2007). There

are many financial barriers for migrant students who need to purchase uniforms, books and school supplies to attend Thai school. The uniform alone costs approximately 3,000 Baht (about US$90) a year per child, making it financially impossible for a migrant family with an income of 1,500 to 2,000 Baht a month per person (Guinard, 2006). Migrant schools, which provide supplies, are therefore more affordable.

Children and youth living in the refugee camps can be educated up to Grade 10. The KED and the KnED are both responsible for curriculum development, teacher training (pre-service and in-service), school inspection, standardizing the curriculum, making textbooks available for all schools, liaison between education NGOs and local organizations and distributing teacher subsidies (KED staff, interview, 28 March 2007). Their ability to carry out these tasks is, however, heavily dependent on financial and technical support from international NGOs.

A variety of 'post-10 programmes' (i.e. post-Grade 10) are run by local and international organizations in the camps and offer courses in engineering, teaching, English language, management, leadership and medical training. However, provision is uneven across the camps; Nupo camp, for example, offers only teacher training, whereas Mae La camp has a wide range of opportunities. Formerly, the Ministry of Interior did not permit education programmes in the camps above Grade 9, the end of compulsory schooling for Thais under the previous constitution. More recently, however, such programmes have been discussed openly with the Royal Thai Government.

9.4 Accreditation and certification

Currently the KED and the KnED play a role similar to that of an MoE, administering the educational system in the camps. Some of the Karen IDP and migrant schools are also part of the KED network and use the KED curriculum, testing and certification processes, but some migrant schools use different curricula and issue their own certificates. For example, many of the BMWEC schools use a hybrid Burmese and KED curriculum (P. Ray, interview, 20 March 2007).

Although not internationally recognized, education on the border is considered far superior to what is being taught in Myanmar and helps students to develop important skills. A Burmese refugee and former Karen National Union soldier now living in Thailand said, "People are getting undergraduate degrees in Myanmar. But it is not good. I met one

student who is a third year English major in Myanmar and her English was worse than a 10th standard [Grade 10] student here" (interview, 21 April 2007). Furthermore, in contrast to the government schools in border areas, refugee and migrant schools in Thailand are able to promote community spirit and participation. As one post-10 graduate observed, "My certificate might not be recognized internationally. But if we can improve the quality and provide higher development we will be able to help our community" (interview, 5 April 2007).

The Karen and Karenni organizations want to develop a future generation of students who know the customs and languages of their forefathers. The mandate of KED is "to build up a true and lasting peace and justice by producing graduates who are critical and creative thinkers, leaders, good citizens and proud of their ethnicity" (KED, 2007). Like any nation state, Karen and Karenni groups along the border have a vested interest in the content of the curriculum and therefore in the certificates which represent mastery of it.

The major problem, however, is that even though the KED and KnED view themselves as education ministries in waiting, they are not internationally recognized as such. The curriculum they have developed and the certificates they can provide are not recognized outside their own community. Karen and Karenni groups are also part of a larger umbrella group called the National Health and Education Committee (NHEC) whose mandate is "to create, adopt and implement a national education and health policy in equal partnership with all nationalities" (T. Naing, interview, 27 May 2007). NHEC, located in Thailand, India and China (states bordering Myanmar), has developed a constitution that could be adopted as a basis for Myanmar's when it obtains democracy. It has also developed a curriculum that could be used for the whole nation. Thein Naing, the academic co-ordinator/education programme for NHEC, explained that the school curriculum he helped to develop "is aimed for reconciliation through education; we are preparing for the future for a federal democratic union, promoting peace, human rights and democracy" (interview, 27 May 2007).

Although NHEC is recognized by almost all the pro-democracy groups fighting for Myanmar's freedom, it too has no real power or international recognition. Even if it produced certificates for all formal education programmes along the border, it is not representative of a recognized nation state. Students who gain certificates from the refugee

and migrant schools are not eligible to attend any university, including Thai universities. This is a major concern for many youth along the border. Naw Lwin, a 22-year-old, said, "I would like to study in university but not possible in camp. But if possible I would like to study maths and science" (interview, 5 April 2007).

Students are concerned that even with financial assistance they cannot apply to university. Although the KED is trying to establish its own university (KED staff, interview, 28 March 2007), such an institution would have the same problems as the primary and secondary schools in that its certificates would not necessarily enable graduating students to pursue further studies or job opportunities. Yet the existing certifications, although not recognized internationally, should not be completely dismissed, as they represent achievements in an education system that has been created to represent its peoples and to develop the community.

Many ethnic Burmese youth receive a Thai education. However, without Thai citizenship it is difficult for them to obtain the certification needed to apply to Thai universities. Thailand's Ministry of Education (MoE) first expressed interest in refugee and migrant education in April 2005 in response to the conflict in the south of Thailand and the Royal Thai Government's concern about the Muslim schools in the region (F. Ligon, World Education Thailand Director, interview, 19 April 2007). The National Security Council wanted the MoE to become more involved in regulating such schools; Chinese and migrant schools were also investigated. Discussions were begun with NGOs to make the MoE more concerned with migrant and refugee education generally. There had already been indications that the MoE wanted to do this, especially under its Education for All policies; the fact that migrant schools were considered illegal by the Ministry of Interior, however, meant that the MoE could not have any connection with them (F. Ligon, World Education Thailand Director, interview, 19 April 2007). The first step by the MoE in support of refugee education has been sending Thai teachers (funded by UNHCR) to the refugee camps.

The relatively recent proposed solution for accreditation and certification is that migrant and refugee schools should teach the Thai curriculum for mathematics, science, Thai language and English, with additional courses in indigenous languages, such as Karen and Karenni, and ethnic culture. This solution allows migrants and refugees to obtain an internationally recognized Thai educational certificate, yet still keep their cultural identity.

One of the biggest barriers to this new solution is to translate the migrant, refugee and Thai curriculum and to identify common content areas. (This is being addressed by the staff at World Education.) In November 2007 the MoE prepared a document to submit to the cabinet to regulate schools within the system. The document covers areas such as minimum age of teachers (18), terminology (instructor rather than teacher), etc. (F. Ligon, World Education Thailand Director, personal communication, 15 November 2007). Although there will be many bureaucratic hurdles before Thai certificates are available in migrant and refugee schools, steps are definitely being taken in this direction.

Providing migrant and refugee schools with the possibility of Thai certification is considered by most as a very positive development. However, the issue of local ownership also warrants attention, given the pride of the local educational authorities in the curriculum they helped develop. Although KED acknowledged the importance of internationally recognized certificates (KED staff, interview, 28 March 2007), one can imagine that it is not easy to relinquish control over what young people learn in school to another authority.

Having a recognized certificate might be useful to refugees resettled in Western countries, and Thai certification could also give migrants and refugees access to universities and jobs in Thailand. However, there are severe limitations on travel and employment for Burmese in Thailand. If young people from Myanmar cannot legally integrate into Thailand, then how useful is it to study the Thai curriculum? Although Thai certificates will resolve some of the certification issues for the refugees and migrants, other concerns still need to be addressed. The two most significant are the mobility within Thailand of students who earn certificates, and maintaining local ownership and relevance of the education curriculum.

A select few migrants and refugees along the border have access to internationally recognized certificates; one religious school in Mae La refugee camp, for example, uses a curriculum from India and students obtain internationally recognized Indian certificates. One NGO has been assisting refugees, migrants and IDPs for the past ten years to obtain their General Educational Development (GED) certificate, an American test for those applying to American universities, which is also accepted by some Thai universities. This programme is very competitive and admits only about twenty students a year. Once admitted, the students have an extremely rigorous programme and heavy workload. At the end

of the year the students sit for the GED and, if successful, can apply to universities in Thailand or abroad; scholarships are available for successful applicants. This NGO has been assisting students to obtain proper identification (such as Thai identification or a Burmese passport) in order to attend schools in Thailand and abroad. The drawback in both of these cases is that Indian and American curricula, although internationally accepted, are not necessarily relevant for refugees from Myanmar living in Thailand.

Between 2004 and 2007, over 26,000 refugees have been resettled from the Thailand-Myanmar border to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, the United States of America, Norway, Netherlands and the United Kingdom (International Organization for Migration, 2007). Many people are resettling in order to guarantee higher levels of education for their children. As one teacher and mother reported in Umpium Refugee Camp, she does not want to apply for resettlement but her husband is convincing her that their children can have access to university if they go abroad (interview, 4 March 2007). With a waiver to the Homeland Security Act that will allow Karen to be eligible for resettlement, it was predicted that 12,000 refugees from Myanmar would be resettled in the United States of America during 2007 (E. Kirton, UNHCR Maesot Director, interview, 27 March 2007). However, little is known about the usefulness after resettlement of the certificates awarded along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Further studies are required to ascertain if and how the educational qualifications gained in schools not recognized by any nation state are recognized after resettlement.

9.5 Conclusions

Educational accreditation and certification for the young people from Myanmar living in Thailand is a complicated issue. The policies of the Royal Thai Government and the ethnic diversity of the refugee and migrant communities, who have developed curricula and certification processes recognized by neither Myanmar nor Thailand, are significant contributing factors. Many migrant and refugee students complete their education with formal recognition by an organization such as the KED which considers itself an MoE of a government in waiting but which is perceived by others as a community-based organization. Value is placed on the certificates precisely because they are associated with a political and ethnic identity and because the local education system successfully develops the skill sets which help students obtain jobs and higher learning

within the community. However, for young people whose future is quite uncertain, and will most likely involve further displacement, their usefulness is limited. Access to Thai certification of a Thai-recognized curriculum is a significant step forward, yet the question remains as to whether it will be accompanied by more lenient policies and expanded legal rights for ethnic Burmese in Thailand.

Chapter 10

Towards the certification of learning achievements for Burmese refugees in Thailand: a non-governmental organization perspective

Marc van der Stouwe and Su-Ann Oh

10.1   Introduction

The certification of refugee education along the Thai-Burmese border involves a handful of actors and myriad complexities and opportunities. In *Chapter 9* above, Olloriak Sawade maps out the education system and the role of the actors within it, describing the challenges of certification. Tensions in the certification process arise out of political sensitivities, the difficulty of covering all eventualities for the refugees and the need to assure the quality and relevance of the curriculum. This chapter describes the process of negotiations amongst those involved and outlines the political concerns of each actor and the technicalities involved in certification. We draw upon our personal experiences of working along the Thai-Burmese border. Besides offering our own viewpoints, we present the role and perspective of ZOA Refugee Care Thailand (ZOA) in co-ordinating, negotiating and pushing forward the certification process for education in the seven predominantly Karen camps. (A note to readers: we use the personal pronoun 'we' in this paper to speak of our own perspective as distinct from that of ZOA.) As the main education funder and implementer in these seven camps, ZOA draws on good institutional relationships and understanding of the community dynamics and the education system. The organization also appreciates and accepts its limitations as an NGO.

We do not have statistical data for the certification process happening now. Instead, we refer to internal meeting minutes, evaluation reports, programme activity notes and anecdotal evidence.

The certification of learning in the refugee camps along the Thai-Burmese border is a separate process from the one in development

for Burmese migrant children in Tak province in Thailand. As refugees and migrants are defined differently by the Thai government, the policies and the provision of services for them are developed and delivered quite separately, usually by different organizations. Moreover, the refugee camps have been in existence for more than 20 years, and well-established communities and social institutions have grown up. This protracted refugee situation has its own set of challenges and opportunities. With regards to education, it means that there is a system with education management bodies, curriculum, school buildings, teaching staff and timetables. However, the longstanding encampment and the subsequent limited opportunities for educational development have led to questionable quality and relevance of the curriculum and fragmentation of the overall system. We discuss this set of challenges and opportunities in detail in the following sections, with particular attention to the certification of learning for refugees.

10.2 Rationale behind the certification process

Given the protracted refugee presence along the Thai-Burmese border, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that the refugee camps are a temporary solution, meant to precede the establishment of something more durable. Current development interventions along the border require a clear focus on assisting communities to prepare for a future outside the camps. The Comprehensive Plan 2007 drawn up by all NGOs providing services for Burmese refugees, together with UNHCR Thailand, confirms that long-term confinement in closed camps has an extremely negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of refugees and on their opportunities for involvement in economic and/or educational activities. The Comprehensive Plan stresses the importance of linking the provision of in-camp services with initiatives to help refugees use their human potential outside the camps, either in the short or long term (CCSDPT/ UNHCR, 2007). The accreditation of refugee education programmes and certification of learners' achievements is crucial for the futures of refugee students outside the camps.

The main consideration behind ZOA's decision to pursue access to accredited and recognized education programmes is the further education or employment in the future, which certification should make possible. However, the link between a recognized education system and access to further education or jobs is not as straightforward as it might seem. The choice of a certification option is made based on the refugees' expected

future situation, but this future is highly uncertain; it might be repatriation to Myanmar, integration into the host country (Thailand) or resettlement to a third country. The latter has been happening on a significant scale since 2005. All future options might come about simultaneously for different groups of refugees. This makes it very difficult to design a certification process that will support future employment and education opportunities for all refugee students.

Along with the future benefits to result from certification, we believe that it confers advantages in the 'here and now' of the refugee situation. Firstly, it is apparent that the prospect of obtaining recognized certificates motivates refugee students, and thus might help reduce early drop-out. Another benefit is that it provides an opportunity to initiate curriculum change. As mentioned above, the curriculum now used in the camp schools suffers from reduced quality, relevance and coherence. This was confirmed by an external assessment of the camp education system commissioned by ZOA in 2004/2005 (Thomas and Reyes, 2005). We believe that any certification process should be linked to a wider process of curriculum reform, including the incorporation of new, sometimes sensitive, topics in the curriculum. Finally, certification is a part of ZOA's advocacy efforts to shape the broader agenda on refugee policy, linked particularly to the 'opening up of the camps'. Certification and recognition of the curriculum by an outside authority would help form links with the outside world, and support and strengthen other ZOA initiatives, such as providing access to higher education in Thailand-based tertiary institutions for refugee students and creating opportunities for income generation outside the camps.

10.3 The choice of a certification model

Firstly, obtaining certification through the Burmese government is out of the question, for obvious political reasons. Certification through international agencies might be too costly or difficult to manage on a large scale. Certification through the Thai MoE seems to be the main option available at this stage, especially given the fact that the MoE has expressed interest in it.

This is an unprecedented change in the Royal Thai Government's position vis-à-vis refugee education in the camps. The first indication of such MoE interest was expressed by the Permanent Secretary during a visit to Mae La refugee camp and Burmese migrant schools in April 2005. Initially, certification efforts mainly focused on the migrant

student population, as the accreditation of their programmes would be easier to achieve within the existing policy environment. However, in February 2007, accreditation of refugee learning programmes appeared prominently on the agenda during one of the regular informal policy co-ordination meetings organized by Chulalongkorn University and attended by representatives of the MoE, the Ministry of Interior and NGOs involved in education. During this meeting, representatives of the RTG indicated that it would consider supporting initiatives aimed at accreditation of refugee education programmes. It was made clear from the outset that seeking certification through the Thai MoE would involve aligning the camp-based curriculum with the MoE curriculum. This does not mean that the MoE curriculum needs to be copied exactly, as provision is made in the Thai curriculum for local content. However, it does require the camp-based curriculum to meet the curriculum standards as formulated by the MoE. Complying with these standards will require time and intensive interactions between the community-based educators and the MoE, education authorities and supporting agencies such as ZOA.

As the main educational NGO working in these seven refugee camps, ZOA decided to pursue the opportunities that had arisen out of this initial expression of interest by the MoE. Together with its partners, ZOA pursued lobbying and advocacy via formal and informal meetings with MoE representatives at both the central and the provincial level, as well as with the refugee communities it works with. One crucial meeting was a conference on certification of learning achievements of refugee and migrant students organized at Chulalongkorn University in May 2007, with a broad representation of stakeholders from the RTG, NGOs and the UN. The participants voiced strong support for the certification of learning achievements for refugees and migrants and took the first steps to establish mechanisms to implement it. ZOA also sought co-operation with UNICEF Thailand to help accomplish certification objectives. UNICEF agreed to be ZOA's partner in the process and made funding available to this end in 2007. In consequence, the relatively informal process followed thus far was replaced by a more formal and structured design for future certification interventions. A project document was developed and submitted to UNICEF in April 2007, in which we identified two separate processes to be followed simultaneously, one political and one technical. The political process focuses on influencing decision-making within the MoE as well as raising awareness and creating commitment within the

KED and the wider education communities in the refugee camps. The technical process aims at curriculum change through working with the camp communities in revising and further developing their curriculum frameworks and teaching and learning materials. The political and technical processes are expected to be mutually reinforcing.

10.4 Analysis: actors, opportunities and complexities

The four main actors in the certification process are: the Karen Education Department and the camp communities; the RTG and the MoE in particular; NGOs providing educational services in the camps (effectively ZOA in the seven predominantly Karen camps and JRS in the two predominantly Karenni camps, with a supporting role played by World Education); and UNICEF Thailand.

Based on the experience built up through our involvement in the certification initiative thus far, we have identified a number of opportunities and complexities relating to certification for Burmese refugees. We discuss them in relation to the roles of the main actors in the certification processes.

The Karen Education Department

Opportunities:

Initial acceptance of the idea of certification. The ownership of the Karen community of their education and curriculum is high and interference by outsiders with 'their' education system is not easy for them to accept. Nonetheless, after initial negotiations between the KED and ZOA, the KED agreed to begin the certification process.

'Kill two birds with one stone'. Starting the certification process is not only a way to receive recognition for the refugee education programme, it is an incentive to change the curriculum and the curriculum development process with the support of technical partners. We expect this to result in enhanced quality, relevance and comprehensiveness of the curriculum.

Complexities:

Continued resistance within the Karen Education Department. Although the KED has expressed its commitment to curriculum change, opinions on the importance of the certification initiative might differ within the KED, and some issues are expected to continue creating anxieties and even resistance. These anxieties are mainly related to the fear of children

losing their Karen identity and values[11] as taught in the Karen curriculum. The KED fears that the content relating to Karen identity and values will lose its prominent place in the curriculum once the Thai MoE becomes involved, and that it will lose its institutional control over the curriculum. All parties need to realize that alignment with the MoE curriculum would go beyond curriculum change. It would also entail systemic changes, and these take time and effort. On the other hand, the resistance we perceive within the KED is much less present at the camp level. Based on the anecdotal information we collected in discussions with the community about certification, camp-based teachers, students, education managers and parents have been strongly in favour of certification and alignment with the Thai curriculum, because of the associated potential educational and employment benefits which are their main goal.

Lack of capacity and resources. Despite high ambitions, the KED is a relatively small organization seriously lacking in capacity and resources. We believe that it will be extremely difficult for the staff to fulfil the major technical roles in curriculum change and that they will need strong support from outside actors. The KED itself also recognizes this.

The Royal Thai Government

Opportunities:

Royal Thai Government commitment. As mentioned above, there is an unprecedented level of openness and commitment on the part of the RTG and the MoE in particular. Based on its commitment to Education for All and the awareness that the refugee situation is there to stay for the foreseeable future, they are willing to consider options for improving the educational situation of Burmese refugees, including accreditation by the Thai MoE. Various departments and individuals at the MoE, especially at the local level, have shown their commitment and are drivers in the process.

Availability of technical expertise. Technical expertise is available within the MoE which can be used to advance curriculum change.

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11. Although Karen cultural values are often mentioned by KED staff and the communities in the camps, it is not always clear what is actually meant, especially given the heterogeneity of the camp population. Karen traditional values seem to be linked mainly to the Sqaw-Karen speaking Christian elite connected with the Karen National Union. More information about Karen identity can be found in South (2007).

Flexible curriculum. The MoE has a standards-based curriculum which defines learning outcomes but does not strictly prescribe curriculum content. Provision is made for 30 per cent of the curriculum to consist of 'local content'.

Complexities:

The Royal Thai Government commitment. It is not entirely clear how steadfast or how far the RTG's commitment to certification for refugee learning goes. It remains to be seen how the newly appointed government will view the refugee situation and how far it will sustain the deeper involvement pursued by the two previous governments. At this stage, there is no reason to assume that the RTG's stance will change in the near future. A related question is that of the MoE's commitment. It does seem to have a large degree of internal motivation through its commitment to achieving the Education for All goals in Thailand. Having said that, different objectives may be present in different MoE departments and in other RTG departments. Additionally, MoE involvement may not be driven by the MoE's own commitment only; it may be partly explained by the external pressure exerted by the National Security Council and others as part of a broader initiative to enhance security along Thailand's border areas. Finally, we have observed that the role of particular individuals is crucial: without the support of certain individuals within the RTG, or if such individuals were to move from their current positions, it would be very difficult to succeed.

Time-consuming process. As the certification process requires policy adjustments to be made within the MoE, considerable time will be needed to make significant progress. Delays could affect the commitment of the KED and camp-based stakeholders.

Focus on Thai language. A prerequisite of the MoE is that pupils in camp schools learn the Thai language once they begin primary level schooling. This means that children need to learn a fourth language in addition to the three others they currently study (Karen, Burmese and English). An additional problem is identifying enough qualified teachers willing to teach in the relatively inaccessible refugee camps, even if paid and supported by the MoE.

Educational non-governmental organizations

Opportunities:

Effective process management. NGOs are ideal 'process facilitators' and intermediaries between the various actors involved. They combine a clear understanding of the local situation and close links with camp communities with the ability to interact with the RTG and the experience to manage complex processes.

Complexities:

Limited technical expertise available within non-governmental organizations. Although the NGOs along the border could be considered effective process facilitators, they do not always have high levels of expertise in the area of curriculum development. It is difficult to hire expertise in this specialized area given budget constraints and declining donor funding as well as scarcity of expertise available.

Learning to be a lobbyist. The Committee for Co-ordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT), as an umbrella organization of NGOs working on the Thai-Burmese border, has built up significant experience in advocating for improved living conditions for refugees in Thailand. However, lobbying targeting the establishment and improvement of educational opportunities for refugees requires more specialized expertise, which is better provided by individual education NGOs than by a representative organization such as the CCSDPT. The RTG was not previously involved in serving the educational needs of the Burmese refugee population, and had therefore never been the target of NGO lobbying. New networks had to be established among policy actors previously absent from the Thai-Burmese border and education NGOs such as ZOA. These education NGOs have had to build up experience quickly in this new role, and they still have a lot to learn. It is not possible for these NGOs to free up staff members' time to become fully involved in lobbying and advocacy; this must be added to the daily workload of a handful of busy senior programme staff members.

Lack of co-ordination among the NGOs. In Thailand, a similar certification process is going on in migrant schools. Given the different actors involved in each case, there are good reasons for keeping these processes separate. However, it is felt that insufficient co-ordination and mutual learning occurs between the NGOs managing the two processes. Increased co-operation would probably benefit both groups.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Thailand

Opportunities:

Availability of funding. UNICEF has made a sum of money available to support the political and technical processes which are part of the certification initiative. Although the funding might not fully cover all required interventions, the UNICEF contribution will significantly support them. UNICEF does understand that influencing policy should be an integral part of a project of this nature and that these activities need to be included in the project budget.

Partnering in policy influencing. UNICEF not only plays an important role as a funder, it is also actively involved in lobbying. The agency's political weight and close contacts with the MoE in Thailand, especially at the highest levels, provide excellent opportunities to implement change. Its global network and access to relevant expertise from other development situations could also prove invaluable in pushing the process forward.

Complexities:

Limited understanding of the specific context. Although UNICEF Thailand has close ties with the Thai MoE, it has never before worked on the refugee situation. We believe that the certification process will be more effective if UNICEF's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the current education system and the roles played by the community actors are enhanced.

10.5 The way forward

With the support of ZOA, the local MoE and the involvement of other NGOs, the KED is revising and developing its draft curriculum framework, which it planned to submit to the MoE for consideration in February 2008. (A good example of the involvement of other NGOs is the drafting of the new curriculum framework for health as a school subject. NGOs working on health, particularly the IRC and the Action for the Rights of the Child International, were heavily involved in drafting the new health curriculum.) This framework has been aligned with the Thai education system and therefore accommodates 12 grades instead of the current 10. It has a much stronger emphasis on the acquisition of skills, attitudes and values alongside the traditional focus on gaining knowledge. It includes new topics and learning outcomes, especially in the areas of

health, environment, physical education and community management. It makes adjustments to already existing curriculum topics for better alignment with the MoE curriculum and to improve the relevance of the curriculum to the daily lives of the students. It outlines the teaching and learning approaches and methodologies to be followed, with increased emphasis on problem-solving, research skills and group work.

After submission of this draft framework, ZOA expects that a lengthy process of curriculum assessment, adjustment and further development at increasing levels of detail will take place, involving intensive communication between the KED, the MoE and ZOA. The ultimate outcome expected is MoE approval of the curriculum, although it is impossible to provide a clear time-frame for this, as many variables – such as political will, technical capacities and availability of funding – may affect the pace of the process. Once the MoE approves the framework, the KED will begin developing teaching and learning materials, also time-consuming. The new materials will be introduced into the camp schools gradually. To ensure that the new curriculum is implemented smoothly, teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders will all need training. Throughout the process, ZOA will help to organize workshops, meetings and events in order to create acceptance and commitment, while ensuring that the expectations and desires of the refugee educators and learners are met and that their expertise is used to shape the process.

In the meantime, it is imperative to consider short-term solutions for students who are in school now and who may not benefit from this eventual outcome. ZOA is discussing with the MoE the possibility of allowing current students to take MoE examinations and to do so in their own language since they are unable to speak, read or write Thai.

10.6 Lessons learned and conclusions

The international efforts for Education for All have helped to push forward the certification process in Thailand; having made policy commitments to Education for All, the MoE has become more open to dealing with the education of refugees and migrants. The path to the certification of refugee education in the camps in Thailand, although littered with obstacles, detours and unexpected turns, seems to be opening up. ZOA hopes to take full advantage of this to achieve certification for both school-based and adult learning by building upon its current experience and pushing forward its other related initiatives. For example, it has already invested much effort in negotiating the

certification of vocational learning in the camps, in co-operation with local vocational and technical colleges. Groups of learners now receive a certificate accredited by a local Thai college. It is also working on getting the certification of teacher training on the agenda, especially since accrediting school-based learning cannot be considered in isolation from accredited teacher training.

We must take into account the lessons learned so far and draw upon the experiences of practitioners and policy-makers working in other refugee and development contexts. In Thailand, the trust and co-operation ZOA had previously established with the MoE, the KED, other NGOs and UNICEF Thailand has been crucial to the political process. The key has been regular open communication and frequent personal interaction. It has also been important to identify the potential and limitations of each actor, as outlined above.

The technical process of curriculum change, and the ensuing training and systemic changes required, are progressing at a slower pace. This is understandable: it is only when the political process has moved forward that we can fully engage the technical issues. Here is where lessons gleaned from other situations (as highlighted in the other chapters) are invaluable. For example, we can anticipate and deal with the potentially negative impact of emphasis on testing and assessment, compared with criteria of the relevance and innovative character of the curriculum and learning process, by referring to work done in other countries (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2007; Sesnan, 1999). Further research should shed light on the best ways to implement a revised curriculum, to pinpoint possible areas of resistance from or contention with school principals, teachers, students and parents, and to devise solutions to these.

Finally, it is vital to situate certification within the context of forced migration. In talking about certifying refugee, migrant and IDP education, the crux of the matter is that certification is bound up with recognition by nation states. At the moment, the learning in camp schools is not officially recognized by any national or international body. To all intents and purposes, it is invisible to the world outside the camps. The challenge then is how to 'officialize' unofficial systems. Besides national recognition, refugees are seeking international recognition of their learning. A sizeable number of refugees are being resettled to other countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia. Will Thai certificates be worth anything once they get there?

Chapter 11

Ensuring certification of learning for internally displaced students from Chechnya in Ingushetia

International Rescue Committee, Northern Caucasus

11.1 Introduction

This chapter is a case study of the period 2000 to 2005 which examines the processes and methods employed by IRC staff to certify learning in the Republic of Ingushetia for IDPs from the neighbouring republic of Chechnya, in the Russian Federation. Analysis is based on data from internal IRC documents and semi-structured interviews with staff directly involved in student certification.[12] The chapter begins with an overview of the political situation in the Republic of Chechnya and its implications for the Republic of Ingushetia, and of the effects of the loss of educational opportunity for teachers and students throughout the conflict. IRC's education programmes for displaced students are then analysed, with emphasis on certification needs and the outcomes and impact of certification. The situation, challenges and learning accomplishments of internally displaced students are reviewed; although they have not crossed international borders, they must still negotiate obstacles to having their learning or training accepted and certified in their home territory.

The Northern Caucasus region has been the site of conflict for thousands of years; Ottomans and Persians fought over the area until they were defeated by the Russian Empire in the sixteenth century. The Chechen people were known for their independent nature, and in modern times some Chechens have pressed for independence from Russia.

Although Chechnya is part of the Russian Federation under the Russian Constitution, a secessionist movement began to gain support in 1990 and in October 1991 Chechnya declared independence. In March 1992, a Chechen constitution was adopted but not recognized by the Russian Federation or the international community, and in 1994 Russian forces invaded Chechnya. After a protracted war with heavy casualties on both sides, the Russians, unable to defeat the rebels in the mountainous south, withdrew from Chechnya in August 1996. In all, approximately 50,000 people died, thousands more were made homeless and much of Chechnya was destroyed.

In October 1999 Russian forces once again invaded Chechnya. Anticipating this invasion, thousands of people started to flee in September, many of them seeking refuge in the neighbouring Republic of Ingushetia.

At the height of the conflict, the UN estimated over 200,000 Chechens were displaced in Ingushetia; approximately 78 per cent of the displaced population were women and children, and 45 per cent of all IDPs were under 18 years old. The displaced spread out into camps, factories, farms, abandoned railcars and private homes in towns and villages in the northern half of Ingushetia. The majority of Chechen IDPs rented private apartments or resided with host families, but those with few resources lived in government-sponsored tent camps or in 'spontaneous settlements'. These were often abandoned government buildings, farms and factories with inadequate lighting and heating, and were usually crowded. Many were isolated from other communities and facilities, including schools and hospitals.

11.2 International Rescue Committee's emergency education programme in Ingushetia

Even before this conflict, schooling for Chechen children had been disrupted to varying degrees for many years. During Soviet times, for example, while most teachers in the villages of Chechnya were Chechen, the majority of teachers in Grozny were from Russian, Armenian, Jewish or other ethnicities. As unrest began to stir in the late 1980s, many of these teachers began to leave Chechnya, creating gaps in the teaching staff. The importance of education in the culture meant that schooling persisted even during difficult times, albeit irregularly and inadequately.

By late 1999 and early 2000, approximately half of the people in Ingushetia were displaced Chechens. In November 2000, there were approximately 65,000 Chechen displaced children aged 3 to 16 in Ingushetia (Stichtick-Betancourt *et al.*, 2002). Of these, 32,000 were aged 7 to 12 and 18,000 aged 13 to 16. Approximately 12,000 of the younger children were attending some sort of school, including 2,000 in government-sponsored basic educational programmes at the tent camps and 3,600 in regular Ingush schools (IRC, 2000; IRC, 2001). The Ingush public infrastructure soon became overwhelmed, and as the education system could only accommodate a small percentage of displaced Chechens, the vast majority of Chechen young people had no opportunities for education whatsoever.

In January 2000, the IRC introduced its emergency education programme, combining non-formal education and recreational/ psychosocial activities, in Ingushetia. The goal was to provide structured activities for the large numbers of displaced children and youth and to build the capacity of the displaced community to respond to the needs of their children. At the outset, IRC provided a six-day training of trainers to five teachers and two youth leaders from two spontaneous settlement sites, as well as an education field officer. The training focused on the role of play and structured activities in promoting psychosocial healing and resilience in the children, and on implementing education programmes in the camps. These eight people formed a core group which launched the emergency education programme for Chechen displaced children. They went on to act as trainers as the programme expanded (Stichick, 2000). The displaced community contributed considerable human capacity and resources. All of the teachers were licensed in Chechnya, some had more than 20 years of teaching experience, and they brought with them curricular knowledge and specialization in certain subjects. Talented young people aged between 15 and 18 were recommended to serve as youth leaders by the settlement communities, and acted as classroom assistants and tutors.

11.3 From non-formal to formal education: student certification

With the establishment of non-formal education, parents were particularly concerned that their children's work and participation in the programme would not be recognized upon their return to Chechnya. In order to address this, and to promote a sustainable education system for

Chechens, the IRC sought recognition of its schools and formal student certification processes via the MoE. In this way, in November 2000, the emergency education programme evolved from a non-formal to a formal education programme. From the initial stages of developing the formal education programme, the MoE in Ingushetia provided technical support for the tent schools and other settlement schools.

By the end of 2001, the IRC's education programme consisted of five staff members including a programme manager and two programme officers to oversee the 45 teachers and 71 youth leaders who implemented and supported the development of the programme.

With support from UNICEF, the IRC contacted the MoE in Ingushetia. At the invitation of the IRC, the MoE Ingushetia inspected the schools and provided feedback on quality and on improvements needed to meet official education standards, leading to eventual graduation certification for the IDP students. The IRC was also in regular communication with the MoE in Chechnya via IRC's education programme manager there. The IRC received study plans from the MoE in both Ingushetia and Chechnya. In June 2001, MoE Ingushetia scheduled final examinations for all Chechen IDPs in the settlement schools in order to assess academic progress and to certify all qualified students.

Initially, the lack of appropriate textbooks to cover the increased numbers enrolled in several grade levels posed the largest barrier to student certification. In particular, textbooks for chemistry, biology, history, geography and physics were not uniformly available, nor were there adequate supplies of textbooks for Grades 5 to 11. Without these required courses and texts, students could not receive graduation certification. With the support of the MoE Ingushetia, IRC was able to negotiate subsidized textbooks at half the regular price. Some support also came from UNICEF.

Additional teachers were needed to meet increased enrolment and subject course requirements. This, in turn, stimulated the development of teacher training and support. A cadre of licensed and experienced teachers took on the role of school directors at each school site, providing curriculum and mentoring support to the other teachers. Additional teacher training support came from the Institute of Teacher Improvement of Ingushetia, and from collaborating NGOs implementing education and psychosocial programming in the region. The teacher training sessions included instruction in topics such as classroom management,

primary school curriculum and psychosocial support, and academic subjects such as biology, chemistry, Russian language and literature, and mathematics.

By the end of 2003, IRC's formal education programme in Ingushetia had achieved 30 subject hours taught in the classroom and was offering 95 per cent of required courses in compliance with the education standards of the Russian Federation. All the 82 IRC teachers successfully completed the two biannual teacher training sessions organized through the MoE. Student enrolment dropped slightly by the end of 2003 to 1,597 students, but attendance rates for those enrolled averaged 90 per cent. Of the 1,597 students, 1,560 passed their certification examinations and 1,544 received grade level certificates (IRC, 2003). Students achieved these results through the support they received both during the academic year and from an eight-week summer programme established to provide lower performing students with additional academic support.

Enrolment in IRC-supported schools in the 2003 to 2004 school year began with 1,569 students and ended with 1,531, indicating considerable stability in numbers. Attendance averaged 91 per cent. The 30 hours per week of classes and over 95 per cent of subjects required by the MoE continued (IRC, 2004).

In June 2004, 64 per cent of students who took the MoE Ingushetia standard examination achieved the highest scores of 4 and 5 on their examinations, and 97 per cent of qualified students received grade level and graduation certificates. The summer programme was structured to include two hours per day of catch-up programming for children with low academic performance. Two hours of youth club or recreational activities were available for about 60 per cent of children from IRC-supported schools.

After large-scale co-ordinated attacks were carried out on law enforcement agencies in Ingushetia by rebel forces in June 2004, authorities conducted rough 'mopping-up' operations, which involved intimidation and unlawful arrests of the IDPs living in the settlements. As a result, many IDPs returned to Chechnya. In the Gazi-Yurt settlement, IRC closed its supported school because all the IDPs left. This was the smallest of the IRC schools, with only 38 students enrolled. The security situation probably affected enrolment and academic performance in other settlement schools as well. For many Chechens, the decision to return home was made under duress, but both students and teachers

could return in the knowledge that their certification and learning would be recognized in Chechnya.

In 2005, the Chechen population in Ingushetia continued to return home. The total number of children enrolled in IRC-supported schools in Ingushetia decreased by 230, from 1,233 in September 2004 to 1,003 at the end of June 2005 (IRC, 2005). The average attendance rate was 89 per cent for all schools. Classes were maintained at 30 hours per week of classroom instruction, and over 95 per cent of the required subjects. In June 2005, 43 per cent of students who took the MoE Ingushetia standard examination achieved the highest scores of 4 and 5; 99 per cent of qualified students received grade level and graduation certificates; and approximately 35 per cent of children enrolled in IRC-supported schools participated in summer programme activities.

11.4 Certification challenges

An initial challenge to certification was an adequate supply of textbooks to cover the required subjects for a growing student population. During the first few months of the formal education programme, as IRC negotiated with local Ingush authorities to purchase books, the language of the textbooks was also an issue. Russian and Ingush textbooks were available but the language of instruction in the IRC-supported schools was Chechen. IRC was quickly able to negotiate to receive Chechen-language textbooks at a discounted price.

At the time IRC was initiating its formal education, efforts were also under way to standardize education curricula throughout the Russian Federation. This meant that preparation for a nation-wide test had to be incorporated into the IRC curriculum. This was a difficult task, but IRC relied upon its close partnership with MoE Ingushetia to provide technical support. MoE Ingushetia monitors came out to visit settlement schools and were able to assist directly with curriculum development and compliance. MoE Chechnya was also able to provide this sort of direct support during the visits of ministry staff during the 2004 to 2005 academic year.

A high degree of bureaucracy was involved in the certification process. This included a formal documentation process called 'proof of passing'. Proof of passing required that the certification examination, attendance records and other school records be stamped with an IRC education stamp as well as the MoE Ingushetia stamp; at one stage the

documents also had to be stamped by MoE Chechnya. The logistics of stamping all of these documents for all students were challenging. At one point, the issuing of some certificates was delayed because a stamp was misplaced or stolen. In addition, examinations were not initially administered in the settlements, and students had to go to an Ingush school for testing. These issues, though seemingly small, further complicated an already complex process.

Although there were no official barriers to certification through MoE Chechnya, communications and collaboration through MoE Ingushetia proved to be much more productive in the initial stages of the certification process. Although IRC maintained regular contact with MoE Chechnya, it would not initially certify teacher training and student learning. Scheduled visits from MoE Chechnya monitors were repeatedly postponed. The political and security situation in Chechnya is sure to have reduced MoE Chechnya officials' ability to follow up with the certification of settlement schools in Ingushetia. MoE Chechnya officials might also have been motivated to delay certification of Chechen teachers and IDP student learning in Ingushetia for fear that the authorities would use it as an excuse to divert funding away from the Chechen education system.

The political situation in Ingushetia and Chechnya continuously affected the stability of the settlements, the IDPs and the formal education programme. IDPs in Ingushetia were threatened with camp and settlement closings, cooking and heating gas being turned off during harsh winters, mopping-up operations conducted by Russian security forces and other pressures intended to force their return to Chechnya. The Russian government's political stance was that there was peace in Chechnya and therefore no reason for Chechens to stay in Ingushetia. However, many IDPs who travelled from Ingushetia to Chechnya and back continued to report sporadic shelling, army occupation and continued harassment by security forces. After the mopping-up operation of June 2004 in Ingushetia, student enrolment and MoE standard test scores fell in IRC settlement schools. As the Chechen population decreased, funding for education and IDP support services became less available, thus making it difficult to maintain the standard of education and care that an international NGO such as IRC was able to establish.

11.5 Factors contributing to certification success

Within two weeks of the start of the non-formal education programme in Ingushetia, parents and older youth in the settlements approached IRC to express their appreciation for the psychosocial support provided by the programme and to request that formal education opportunities also be developed. The parents were generally highly educated themselves, and they saw education as the best way to secure a future for their children. Parents' involvement in and commitment to the programme also contributed to high enrolment and attendance rates. In response to community priorities, IRC shifted the focus of the programme to the certification of teacher training and student learning, with help from the MoE in the initial stages.

Besides the motivation of parents and students, IRC also benefited from the wealth of experience and capacity of a number of highly qualified IDP teachers in the settlement community who had teaching certification from the MoE Chechnya. They brought with them curriculum materials and textbooks, which gave the formal education programme a head start in terms of curriculum development and certification of teachers.

The involvement of MoE Ingushetia in the initial stages of the formal education programme meant that student learning and teacher training developed along a path that led to compliance with education and certification standards. Without this initial involvement, it is unlikely that later engagement with the authorities would have resulted in such effective collaboration.

IRC utilized various resources to build capacity and further develop the education programme, including other NGO implementing partners: the Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development (CPCD), providing school meals; the Danish Refugee Council, providing staff and teacher training on mine awareness; and CARE, Médecins Sans Frontières France and ARD, providing teacher training on psychosocial support. Collaboration among NGO implementing partners made it possible to draw the maximum benefit from the available resources and for the humanitarian aid community to share and make use of lessons learned.

NGO/UN agency partners involved in implementing formal education programming in Ingushetia included UNICEF, Hilfswerk, the Agency for Rehabilitation and Development, the People in Need

Foundation and the CPCD. Meetings were held regularly with these peer agencies in Ingushetia in order to ensure co-ordination of their efforts. MoE officials (initially only MoE Ingushetia, but also MoE Chechnya during 2004 to 2005) regularly attended co-ordination meetings sponsored by UNICEF (facilitated by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance) and attended by all education agencies operating in the region. These co-ordination efforts between the education partners and the MoE in Ingushetia were instrumental in the successful development of formal education.

11.6 Lessons learned

IRC-Northern Caucasus has identified the following lessons learned from the experience of working for the accreditation and certification of learning of IDP students. These lessons are relevant to many other education actors working beyond the Caucasus.

Early collaboration with the MoE is essential. Every effort should be made to develop a close working relationship with the MoE as soon as the decision is made to develop a formal education programme. This will minimize the creation of parallel education programming that is difficult to certify or is not acceptable to the hosting MoE or the MoE in the territory of origin.

Encourage community participation and capacity building. Identifying experienced and certified teachers and making use of the human resources within the displaced community can promote community ownership and buy-in. This can encourage enrolment and attendance. Building the capacity of teachers builds the capacity of students, in terms of enriched learning and enhanced chances of success in examinations.

Maintain organizational linkages in the territory of origin. IRC's presence in Chechnya and communication with MoE Chechnya through its programme office in Chechnya facilitated negotiation with MoE Chechnya to certify IRC settlement schools and teachers in Ingushetia. Without this presence, it is likely that monitoring visits would have been postponed and further delays caused in the certification process.

Participate in and encourage full co-ordination among education partners. Co-ordination and collaboration among partners meant that minimal resources had a significant impact. Collaboration included partners implementing formal education programming as well as others

who could provide support in the form of training, classroom tents and extracurricular activities and events.

11.7 Conclusions

The outcome of IRC's efforts was the provision of grade level and graduation certificates for students by both MoE Ingushetia and MoE Chechnya. Space does not allow for the description of the equally interesting and critically important experience of ensuring the validation of teaching credentials and certification of the teacher training provided by IRC. Both helped to give students and teachers expanded options for livelihoods in Ingushetia and in Chechnya. The certification process has also had a positive psychosocial impact on the students. The formal education programme evolved from the initial psychosocial support-oriented activities because students and their parents advocated for an education which would give young people tangible hope for their future. Seeing the formal education come to fruition, young people could look forward, secure in the knowledge that their learning achievements would be recognized in their home and their host territory, even in the difficult conditions of the settlements and with the limited resources of the settlement schools.

Chapter 12

From schools started under the mango trees: certification for refugee students in the International Rescue Committee Guinea education programme

International Rescue Committee

12.1 Introduction

IRC's refugee education programming in West Africa is noteworthy in many ways, including length, scale and complexity. Certification was a central issue in the development of quality education for refugee students and teachers. This chapter documents the processes, challenges and successes of various initiatives for ensuring certification for refugee students in Guinea. It is based on a case study conducted by IRC in 2005, updated with recent material.[13] Analysis is based on internal IRC documents and semi-structured interviews with staff directly involved in establishing student certification. It begins with an overview of the political situation in the region at the start of the refugee crisis, outlines the interconnected technical and political processes and ends with conclusions and recommendations for policy and programming.

On 24 December 1989, as a result of long-standing tribal conflict, Charles Taylor and his forces attacked Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire. Men and women were murdered, children were forced to take up arms and intellectuals and teachers were targeted. Entire towns emptied as citizens ran for cover in the dense bush, eventually finding their way to safety across the border in Guinea. Through the following decade, Liberians continued to flee to Guinea and other surrounding countries as warring factions ravaged their country. In March 1991, violence exploded in

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13. Rebecca Winthrop led the IRC's internal case studies on certification. For the West Africa case study, special thanks go to Deborah Jones, Leah Sultan-Khan and Camille Evans. Jackie Kirk revised the study for publication here. Much appreciation is owed to the IRC education teams in West Africa, especially David Walker, for their time and input. Stephanie Buckland, Sheri Ritsema and Jennifer Sklar also provided invaluable input.

neighbouring Sierra Leone as external political forces destabilized the country and incited hatred in young men already disaffected by extreme poverty. Again, intellectuals and teachers were often the targets of attack. Conscripted by rebels, children were ordered to murder their own families, teachers or community leaders. This horrific situation in their own country sent many Sierra Leoneans across their borders, including to Guinea, in search of refuge. For the next decade and a half, conflict gripped Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, sending hundreds of thousands fleeing to Guinea. In 1995, at the height of these wars, the refugee population peaked at 672,000 (Tennebaum, 2004: 73).

The region most accessible and safe from the wars raging in Liberia and Sierra Leone were the towns nestled in the dense south-eastern forest of Guinea. UNHCR established its local headquarters at N'Zérékoré, the country's second largest town. Médecins Sans Frontières, UNICEF and other agencies, including IRC, followed.

Even in the very early days, the refugees rallied around community efforts to gather students and teachers to establish ad hoc and supposedly temporary classes on an informal basis. The intention was to make sure the children kept up with their studies, to give everyone a semblance of a normal life during a time of overwhelming insecurity and fear and to keep children out of harm's way; everyone was certain that the war would end within a few months. Many of the subsequent IRC education programme staff had previously been teachers and were part of these efforts; they also understood how important education was at this time. As a Sierra Leonean vice principal stated, "We [parents] lost everything; our lives are done. The only thing we have now is to educate our children so they have a better future." Schools were established wherever there were students, and teachers responded to the challenges of teaching students from kindergarten to Grade 12, in all subjects. As the situation became more entrenched, the refugees themselves realized that whether in resettlement, repatriation or integration, their children's future depended on their staying at school.

As IRC assessed and responded to this situation, it provided small amounts of support, including textbooks, to the refugee schools; it was the only agency supporting education. It was not until 1992 that significant funds to underwrite the programme were received from the Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) of the United States Department of State, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO and a few

private donors. Though IRC was now able to take the lead in running and managing the schools, it was important to maintain the commitment and involvement of the parents who had initiated them, and formal Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) were established.

12.2 The refugee school system

In a francophone host country, the anglophone students could not easily be absorbed into the Guinean education system. As David Walker (IRC Guinea education programme co-ordinator in 2005) explained:

> "At the initial stages, parents and teachers were supporting the schools and making decisions, and running them, and they had to because in their country of origin [Liberia or Sierra Leone] the educational system and the curriculum was and remains quite different from the Guinean system. The first problem was the language barrier. The refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone are English-speaking and the Guinean school system is exclusively French. The Guinean school system couldn't cope with the number of refugees. The Guineans were struggling themselves; taking this on could have jeopardized their [own] school system" (interview, 7 April 2005).

However, the Guinean authorities were sympathetic to the need for classroom space and the refugees had a champion in Minister Ishaba of the Guinea MoE who made sure that they had access to classrooms free of charge at the end of the normal school session. Nonetheless, the influx of tens of thousands of refugees strained Guinean hospitality, and refugee parents were constantly negotiating with nervous Guinean school officials. "The sheer number of refugees in the schools brought tension from things like broken benches. If the refugees used a structure and broke something, that was a big deal", an IRC staff member commented. As late as 2005, IRC school regulations stated that IRC school administrators should be vigilant in caring for facilities when a Guinean school hosted an IRC school (IRC Guinea, 2005: 21-22).

Internationally, systematic support for refugee education was still in its infancy when IRC began the education programme in 1991, and there was little guidance available on how to establish emergency education programming. Yet the refugee educators had already introduced various tools, systems and procedures. As one of the programme founders described it, "When IRC came, we had almost everything. We had

started with our report cards, we started with everything ... transcripts, everything. So they took the same idea that we had and they refined it and that's what we are using presently."

Since there was no overarching framework within which all refugee schools could operate, a basic system was established, similar to that of the Liberian MoE, with a chief school administrator charged with the entire school structure from the IRC base in N'Zérékoré. Each region had a school administrator located in the region he or she supervised. Each regional school administrator was charged with supervising the mobile education co-ordinators. Teachers were hired at the UNHCR stipend of 30,000 Guinean francs per month. Worth around US$35 at the time, it was intended not as a salary but as an 'incentive' (Lange, 1998: 24). In 1991 that sum was about a third of what a normal teacher's salary would be in Liberia.

By the end of 1991, IRC was supervising 99 schools in four regions with a total of 587 teachers and a student population of 26,926 (IRC, 1996: 1). The total refugee population at the end of 1991 was roughly 467,000, made up of 325,000 Liberians and 142,600 Sierra Leoneans. According to UNHCR statistics, the total potential student refugee population – children aged 5 to 17 – was 180,000. In other words, about 15 per cent of the total population of children aged 5 or above attended classes at that time. However, gross enrolment rates improved, and by 2005 attendance was estimated at 60 per cent. Compared to regional enrolment data and given the challenges of refugee life, this figure is impressive.

12.3 Developing curricula: Sierra Leone, Liberia and WAEC examinations

IRC provided an organizing framework for the schools, but textbooks and materials were always in short supply. Particularly in the early days, teachers often had to teach their courses from memory. Students could not take notes and few had books from which to study after class. In the initial months, administrators and teachers met to decide on what course material to cover, but there was no formalized curriculum. The teachers and students managed on a day-to-day basis with the hope that the war would end and they would return home within a matter of weeks.

Unfortunately, the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone continued and it became increasingly clear that secondary school students might be

completing their formal education in the camps. Parents and students wanted to be sure that the courses IRC schools offered would be equivalent to those in their home countries and that diplomas earned would be valid on return. A curriculum had to be developed, but in this unusual situation, with refugees from two different countries in the same camps and settlements, IRC had to ensure that it would work for both Sierra Leone and Liberia. This presented a considerable challenge: although the countries have similar curricula, under the auspices of the WAEC there are also differences. Though this would normally fall under the auspices of an MoE, accreditation of student diplomas and certification of examinations was fast becoming an issue that IRC, as an international NGO, had to address. With its very different French-language curriculum, the Guinean education ministry could not help. Three key challenges thus faced the IRC education staff:

• how to combine the Liberian and Sierra Leonean curriculum so that students from either country could repatriate at any time and not lose credit for class hours;
• how to ensure that refugee students from Sierra Leone and Liberia were adequately prepared to sit for their separate WAEC examinations;
• how to convince WAEC examiners and the Liberia and Sierra Leone MoEs that exiled students were qualified to sit for the same examinations as students in their home countries, and that they should be administered in the camps.

Under the leadership of the then education manager Jeff Davis, the first step was to draw up a curriculum that could be used from Grades K to 12. A group of 32 refugee teachers from all grade levels was formed to write a first draft. In about three weeks, they produced an initial, detailed manual that analysed each subject at each grade level. Subsequent revisions were made over time, the entire process lasting about 14 months.

The curriculum is set out in four columns. The first lists the topic or sub-topic, the second references the textbooks, the third gives suggestions for teaching aids and the fourth offers advice on student activities (IRC).

Box 5   Framing the International Rescue Committee Guinea secondary school curriculum

This curriculum has been developed based on the unique needs of the school system operated by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) for the Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea. The curriculum attempts to harmonize the instructional systems of both countries. The staff at IRC hopes that this curriculum will provide the framework for the education of refugees while in Guinea and upon reintegration into the systems of their home countries.

The aims of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean school programmes have been adapted to the refugee situation in Guinea. The students will develop:

- a facility with the English language;
- a facility with enumeration and calculation;
- an understanding of basic scientific principles;
- an understanding of the social environment and an appreciation for civic responsibility;
- a responsibility for personal health and safety;
- a foundation for further education.

Source: Foreword to IRC Guinea secondary school curriculum, "Introduction to the Liberian/ Sierra Leonean harmonized curriculum for elementary and primary schools", by Dr. Jeff Davis.

This harmonized curriculum recreated the system in Liberia which was based on a 6-3-3-4 model (Grades 1 to 6: primary; Grades 7 to 9: middle; Grades 10 to 12: senior high; Years 13 to 16: university/tertiary). At the time, the Sierra Leonean system was 7-5-2-4. The 6-3-3-4 model had been proposed but not implemented, a situation which proved to be problematic for the returning Sierra Leonean students.

Children from kindergarten to Grade 3 were taught in self-contained classes with teachers teaching all subjects, but from Grade 4 onwards students were taught by subject teachers moving from class to class and teaching all grade levels. Grades 7 to 9 incorporated additional subjects, including civics, history and geography. At the senior high school (Grades 10 to 12) the emphasis was on the WAEC examination subjects; science classes were divided into chemistry, physics and biology, and mathematics was divided into algebra, geometry and trigonometry; economics was also introduced.

With the newly developed curriculum in place, IRC administrators had to make sure all teachers were conversant with it. Many teachers

were trained professionals, but all would benefit from training in the new curriculum; inexperienced teachers needed extra guidance. Curriculum workshops were organized in N'Zérékoré, Macenta, Guéckedou and later in Forecariah. Four training specialists were tasked with following up to "make sure the teachers understood the context, methodology and so on. [We] looked at the teacher's long range plans to make sure they were in line with the curricula. We looked at daily lesson plans" (Robert Martey, interview, July 2005). Besides providing new teachers with coaching, IRC Teacher training specialists were there to see that the experienced professionals continued to work at the highest possible level.

12.4 Student assessment

From early in their history, IRC schools had common reporting formats and issued report cards for all students. Guidelines were provided on assessment, which was to be conducted through tests, quizzes and assignments, with the requirement that teachers give at least two quizzes within a marking period (IRC, 2005: 19-20). Teachers were warned against granting a 'government grade', an informal tradition once common in Liberia that grants a student an automatic 50 per cent score just for taking an examination. In the IRC system, students had to pass any examination on their own merits with a score of 70 per cent or higher. Students were required to pass all subjects before being allowed to matriculate to the next grade level. Failure in any one subject resulted in a 'conditional' pass, and a student who failed in more than one subject was required to repeat the academic year.

Students in Grades 11 and 12 began to focus on the requirements of the final WAEC examination normally given in Grade 12. Failure in either mathematics or English required a student at these grade levels to repeat the subject. Students had to pass six subjects (including mathematics and English) in order to matriculate, including at least one subject from each of the remaining two groups: arts (literature, economics, history and geography) and science (biology, chemistry and physics). French was also required. A conversion chart was then made available by IRC for the purpose of reporting grades for Sierra Leonean or Liberian students to the West African Examinations Council.

With all the efforts for WAEC-aligned curriculum development and assessment processes, the question on everyone's mind was whether IRC schools could issue diplomas that would be accepted in the home countries. This was understood as a critical issue and one on which IRC

had to be proactive, although it was the first time in the region that an NGO had sought accreditation of this type from an MoE. Teams met with officials from the Liberian MoE in Monrovia and with their counterparts in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The stakes were high and the tensions within the IRC office tangible: a positive outcome could make a huge difference to the lives of the thousands of refugee students, and could also set a precedent. A negative outcome would potentially be devastating for the students and for the IRC Guinea education programme.

In the end, the IRC team was successful in winning the approval from officials of the Liberian MoE and Liberia's WAEC officials. For a number of reasons, however, IRC representatives did not fare as well with their counterparts in Sierra Leone. Though IRC's curriculum combined elements of both the Liberian and Sierra Leone school system, there were courses critical to the Sierra Leonean curriculum that IRC did not cover. Courses for Grade 10 to 12 in the IRC schools were developed according to the general syllabus used by WAEC. The challenges arose in trying to develop courses for the specific syllabus used by each country.

WAEC examinations in Sierra Leone and Liberia vary in several key areas. For instance, the Sierra Leone WAEC science examination required students to complete laboratory work, the Liberian examination did not. In Sierra Leone, WAEC tests are given at the completion of Grades 6, 9 and 12. At the end of Grade 12, students sit for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) which is given at the end of the third year of senior high. Essentially, this is the examination students are required to take in order to complete senior high school. Core subjects to be tested differ between Sierra Leone and Liberia. The five Sierra Leone core compulsory subjects are: English, mathematics, biology or chemistry or health science or physics or science, agricultural science or a vocational or technical subject, and history or geography or literature in English. Students are required to sit for five core subjects and three or four electives. There is a 'Sierra Leone studies' unit and a Sierra Leone language requirement. Students are tested in Krio, Kathemene, Mende or Hulimba (WAEC, n.d: 12). By contrast, Liberia's five core subjects are English, Mathematics, one Science Subject, Literature-in-English or Geography or History, and Agricultural Science or vocational or technical subjects (WAEC, n.d.: 13)

In spite of several face-to-face meetings over the years, the MoE in Sierra Leone remained firm in the decision not to validate the IRC

certificates. When the decision was made by the Sierra Leone MoE to move to a '6-3-3-4' system, it decided to give students the WAEC examination at the completion of Grade 9. Prior to the change, students were required only to take the test to graduate from primary school. This change meant that the students in junior secondary school who returned from Guinea without having taken the Grade 9 examination had to repeat, because the national examination was a requirement (Augustine A Korpu, interview, 1 August 2005). Though repatriating refugee students were frustrated at the time, Deputy Chairman Korpu insists that repetition of a grade was "an advantage as to most of the students because their [WAEC] test results were marvellous".

IRC administrators tried to rectify the situation for Sierra Leonean students on many occasions. In August 2001, Education Programme Co-ordinator Diane Matson's letter to Sierra Leone's Acting Director General of Education proposes several ways to reintegrate students from the refugee camps to schools in Sierra Leone. She wrote: "in extraordinary circumstances such as the constraints imposed by war, the established procedures might justifiably be systematically waived" (Matson, 2001). The Ministry did not agree. The only option for students from Sierra Leone was to rejoin the school system on the Ministry's terms.

12.5 WAEC Liberia examinations in the camps in Guinea

With the Liberian agreements in place, by 1992 IRC was able to plan for the first WAEC examinations in the camps which eligible Sierra Leonean and Liberian students could sit. With the logistical support of UNHCR, WAEC officials from Monrovia travelled across the border to the camps and settlement areas in Guinea carrying the Liberian examination papers. They invigilated the examinations in the specially created examination centres and carried the completed papers back to Monrovia for grading and results compilation. The IRC Guinea programs used the same examination schedule as in Liberia, with examinations taking place on the same day and at exactly the same time for all students.

Initially, there were three centres (Guéckedou, Macenta and N'Zérékoré) and therefore three officials, but these numbers later changed as needs and resources permitted. Each one of these centres had one supervisor brought in from Liberia. To help this supervisor, IRC brought in teachers from schools which did not field students for the examinations to act as proctors. These proctors were briefed beforehand on their roles and responsibilities by the supervisor. The number of

proctors assigned to each examination room was determined based on WAEC's standard for the student-to-proctor ratio, which was the same ratio used by examination centres across Liberia. The centre supervisor then moved from one examination room to the next to supervise these proctors and ensure that there was no malpractice.

Other important security measures included locking the examination papers and answer sheets in bags to which only the most senior person on the team had the keys. The examinations and answer sheets were themselves sealed in plastic bags, only to be broken when it was time for the children to take the examinations. The examination and answer sheets were grouped by subject, so that the seal for each subject could only be broken at the scheduled time. As added security, IRC locked up the examination questions and bags in secured offices on its premises and keys were kept by an IRC person.

To ensure that all eligible children had access to the examinations, IRC worked with its partners to transport them from other camps to the examination centres for the period of the examinations, and to accommodate and feed them. For example, for the Guéckedou region, the town of Guéckedou was an examination centre and students from the farthest camp, Kolomba, were transported there for the examinations.

For Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugee students, parents, and teachers the fact that examinations took place, with all the official procedures and protocols, was a very positive event. It signalled that even after the trauma of war and dislocation and the difficulties of refugee life, they were capable of moving on. The pass rate was 68 per cent, a result considered a great success (IRC, 1997: 3-4).

Table 12.1   IRC student candidates for Liberian West African Examinations Council examinations, 1992-1998

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Grade 9	239	438	432	514	344	unknown	291
Grade 12	182	330	344	369	241	391	936
Total no.	421	768	776	883	585	391	1,227

Source: Lange, 1998.

IRC students continued to fare well on the examinations, although there was a disappointing dip in 1994, when the pass rate dropped to 22 per cent. According to a 1997 narrative report, IRC responded by offering extra classes and additional materials. Unfortunately, 1995

results were destroyed due to the fighting in Monrovia, so those results will never be known. The efforts made to boost the grades bore fruit, and the students who sat for the 1997 examination scored higher than any other group in West Africa, with a 94 per cent success rate (IRC, 1997).

Though formal education remained inaccessible for many people in the West African sub-region, in 1998 for example, a total of 1,227 refugee students in Grades 9 and 12 sat for the WAEC examinations. This success is, however, compromised by the fact that the number of students who sat for these examinations was relatively low compared to the number of potential candidates. This low participation is due to several factors, including the fact that the examinations were held only in N'Zérékoré and Macenta, and that between 1994 and 1998 refugee parents had to pay between 30 and 50 per cent of the WAEC examination fees, an amount beyond the reach of many refugee parents.

12.6 A setback in certification

Sadly, the 1,227 Liberian refugee students who registered to sit for the 1999 examinations by December 1998 suffered a terrible setback when Liberian President Charles Taylor declined to permit WAEC officials to conduct the examinations in Guinea. He demanded that Liberian students repatriate to sit the examinations in their own country. Though thousands of Liberians began to return, civil unrest continued, sending refugees back across the border to Guinea. Despite efforts from IRC to maintain the collaboration and the arrangement with WAEC, the cross-border WAEC examinations were suspended from 1999 to 2003. Students completed their schooling with well-earned IRC certificates, but these were not formally recognized by the Liberian MoE. Without Liberian-sanctioned WAEC examinations to certify learning, the IRC certificates were of limited and local value.

When David Walker took the position of IRC Guinea education programme co-ordinator in 2004, reinstating WAEC was a top priority and one of his biggest challenges. He felt that one of the weak points in the IRC strategy had been its failure to engage the Guinean MoE in the negotiations, and he therefore decided to approach the host education officials to ask for their help in developing a new strategy. The MoE agreed that it would be in the best interest of all stakeholders to reinstate the Liberian WAEC for refugee students in Guinea. Walker suggested that if the Guinean ministry were to issue the invitation to its counterparts, the ministries of Sierra Leone and Liberia might at least agree to a series

of high-level meetings. It was a long shot that Sierra Leone would agree to recognize IRC certificates or allow WAEC to test Sierra Leonean students. However, the Guinean ministry agreed that including the Sierra Leone MoE in the discussions was important. Walker presented the idea to officials from UNHCR, who agreed to support the meetings. The MoE in Guinea issued the invitations to the ministries in Sierra Leone and Liberia and to officials from WAEC. On 17 March 2004, the meetings were held in Guinea.

The strategy worked particularly well with the Liberian ministry, paving the way for the reinstatement of the WAEC Liberia examinations in Guinea later in the year. Although IRC was only partially successful with Sierra Leone, Walker recalls that "we were able to convince the MoE in Sierra Leone and WAEC in Sierra Leone to agree that their students could register as refugees in Guinea through UNHCR and sit for examinations in Sierra Leone as private candidates. That was a big step forward" (interview, 27 July 2005). For the first time, the Sierra Leonean officials recognized IRC-issued student diplomas as valid pre-requisite documents.

Table 12.2   IRC's West African Examinations Council examination candidates, 2004-2005

	2004	2005
Grade 6		1135
Grade 9	788	687
Grade 12	378	436
Total	1166	2261

Source: IRC programme data.

12.7 Conclusions and recommendations

The experience of working towards the formal certification of refugee students documented by IRC highlights a number of key issues and provides a basis for recommendations for policy and programming. These include:

The engagement of the host education ministry: Even though the Guinean ministry was not able to integrate the refugee students into the system, it nonetheless played an important role, not only in providing space for the refugee classes but, most strategically, in the negotiations with the Sierra Leone and Guinea MoEs. Host education ministry officials should wherever possible be engaged in cross-border certification and examination negotiations, even when they are not directly involved.

The refugee educators' commitment and capacity: The school system was started by the refugee teachers and students who established schools 'under the mango trees' and, over time, developed the required new skills and understandings to work effectively with the new 'blended' curriculum. They understood the importance of certification to the students and their families. Engaging the teachers in the development of the curriculum was an important strategy to build ownership and commitment to it, and may have served to overcome some of the concerns that existed about its 'neutrality'. The teachers' commitment should be recognized and participatory processes used throughout the programme to ensure that they are consulted and that their insights and experiences are built upon.

A regional, 'supra-national' body: Although it serves national governments, the WAEC provided a very important supra-national mechanism for certification which, in a time of conflict and devastated education systems in Sierra Leone and Liberia, provided a consistent framework and standards in order to legitimize and formalize learning achievements of refugee children.

Involvement of an international NGO: Although negotiations about certification had not normally been the domain of an NGO, IRC was able to secure cross-border certification because of its technical capacity to develop and implement the necessary technical processes, to negotiate across borders with government authorities even in times of conflict, and to bring other partners on board. Although MoEs should wherever possible take the lead in providing education services, including certification, the experience described in this chapter suggests that donors, policy-makers, UN agencies and others should recognize the particular strengths of an NGO in specific aspects of refugee and IDP education.

Technical tools: The IRC's carefully developed, blended curriculum and the conversion charts, report cards, etc., were important tools for the teachers and other education personnel as well as for the parents and students. Time and resources should be allocated for the development of such tools, and recognition given to the technical skills required of the technical advisors and other educators involved.

Space does not allow for the discussion of related issues of teacher certification and how to adapt relationships and processes developed for student certification to support efforts to recognize the professional learning and skills development of the teachers This too is an important issue for refugee education programmes to incorporate into programme design and planning.

Chapter 13

Hope for the future: issues of educational certification in Dadaab, Kenya

Erick Gerstner

"We used to regard the camp as a prison cell but remember that most of the African leaders who freed their nations from colonialism were one day prisoners. I advise you to take the life of the camp as a university where you learn to change your community, country and the continent at large" (a message to the youth in the camps from Mohamud, a young man from Ifo, Kenya, who was subsequently resettled to the USA).

13.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses issues of educational certification in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. A visitor to Dadaab can see that the refugees are, in a sense, not truly living there. They are living in a present that is wholly oriented to a brighter future; a future filled with hope and opportunities. Education is hope. Education is the key - the way out. For this reason, education certificates are valued more highly than almost any other possession, and education is repeatedly mentioned as the most vital service provided in the camps.

The research for this chapter included approximately 40 semi-structured interviews in Dadaab with students, youth, parents, education staff, PTA members and other key staff of UNHCR and its main implementing partner, CARE Kenya. This chapter also draws on informal observations and discussions over the five months spent working in Dadaab.

13.2 The context: Dadaab refugee camps

Somalia suffers the devastating effects of conflict which has raged off and on for the past 17 years. Millions of people have been internally as well as internationally displaced. 170,405 refugees (UNHCR, 2007*a*) are living in three refugee camps near the town of Dadaab in the east of Kenya: Ifo, Dagahaley and Hagadera. The camps are

situated approximately 80 kilometres from the Somali border (UNHCR, 2007*b*) in one of the harshest environments imaginable, with semi-arid conditions and temperatures often reaching 40 to 50 degrees Celsius. To compound matters, Dadaab suffers numerous environmental crises, such as a three-year drought followed by severe flooding in the latter half of 2006, which badly affected 100,000 refugees (UNHCR, 2006). During this period, airlifts were the only viable means of providing relief supplies to the camps, and to date UNHCR and its implementing partners are still working on moving approximately 15,000 refugees in Ifo away from the flood-prone areas (author observations, 2007).

Refugees' movement is restricted in Kenya, making settlement anywhere outside of the camps precarious. Gordon Denoon, head of CARE Kenya sub-office Dadaab, hopes that the new Refugee Act will bring far-reaching changes in mobility and opportunities to work in the formal economy (personal communication, 8 May 2007). The Act (Republic of Kenya, 2006: 453) may, however, be more restrictive than initially hoped. It states that refugees are "subject to the same restrictions as are imposed on persons who are not citizens of Kenya" with regards to wage-earning employment. While this seems favourable at first glance, it implies the need of a work permit, unaffordable to all but an elite few of the refugees. Furthermore, the government closed the border with Somalia in early 2007, hampering access to a safe environment for new asylum seekers and complicating the import of goods and other forms of cross-border commerce with Somalia.

Young people in Dadaab have limited employment and education opportunities. The few jobs for youth in the camps include 'incentive worker' for the UN or other NGOs in Dadaab or working with small businesses in the markets. Most end up idle, involved in drugs or other criminal activities (B. Karanja, personal communication, 15 May 2007). Youth often leave the camps illegally, hoping to find jobs. Some are even choosing to return to Somalia in search of employment or to join militias (Khalif, personal communication, 5 May 2007). Girls are often forced into marriage at an early age, severely limiting their prospects for education and other future opportunities (Fatuma, personal communication, 27 May 2007).

13.3 Education for refugee children and youth

"If the refugee youth are educated, they will understand that it is their responsibility to bring peace to their country. They will

understand that they can change Somalia" (Farah, male refugee youth from Ifo).

CARE Kenya is UNHCR's main implementing partner for education in Dadaab (UNHCR, 2007*b*). Each camp has five or six primary schools and one secondary school. The schools follow the Kenyan curriculum, with eight years of primary education (Standard 1 to 8) and four years of secondary (Form 1 to 4). CARE also offers adult literacy courses, limited special needs education and some vocational training (UNHCR, 2007*c*). The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) provides peace education in secondary schools as well as in the community at large. Windle Trust offers English language courses, mainly to teachers and community leaders (P. Boro, personal communication, 22 May 2007). The Norwegian Refugee Council recently started a 'Youth Education Pack', which in 2008 will include vocational and life skills training for approximately 240 youth (P. Kristiansen, personal communication, 29 November 2007). Besides these NGO programmes, many private schools operate in the markets, offering a range of learning options from adult literacy classes to computer classes and tutoring in Swahili, English and Mathematics. Many *duksis*, or Koranic schools, operate in the camps and the majority of pupils who attend formal education also attend classes at *duksis. Madrassas* also operate in the camps, where students can receive primary education including Arabic, mathematics and history (Aden, personal communication, 27 April 2007).

Primary education is free and officially available to all in Dadaab. Limited funding, however, creates numerous problems. While CARE's education sector serves 15,500 female and 24,500 male students in primary and secondary school (CARE Kenya, 2007*a*), drop-out rates are high and an estimated 14,950 school-age children and youth are out of school (UNHCR, 2007*d*). Only one fifth of primary school graduates are able to make the transition to secondary, due to a lack of capacity in secondary schools (CARE Kenya, 2007*b*). Classrooms are overcrowded and many classrooms and other education facilities are in desperate need of repair. There is a huge lack of qualified teachers; only 6 per cent have training from colleges in Kenya (CARE Kenya, 2007*c*). While the average student-to-textbook ratio is 4 to 1, some classes have a ratio of 20 or even 30 to 1 (CARE Kenya, 2007*d*). Girls are greatly underrepresented in the formal education system and face numerous obstacles in performing at the same level as boys (Fatuma, personal communication, 27 May 2007). These include additional chores before and after school, complications

related to female genital mutilation, difficulty in returning to schools in the evening to study due to safety issues and early, arranged or forced marriages.

13.4 Certification

The UNHCR education field guidelines emphasize educational certification and the recognition of certificates by the MoE in the country of asylum as well as the country of origin (2003: 13-14). The importance of educational certification for refugee pupils in Dadaab is undeniable; Francesca Bonelli, the community services officer in Dadaab, sees this as a crucial component in all stages of the refugees' schooling (personal communication, 20 April 2007). Pupils gather certificates from any and all courses offered in the camps and some have stacks of up to thirty certificates accrued from various workshops as well as formal education (Khalif, personal communication, 5 May 2007). Ubah emphasizes the importance of certificates: "If one does not have certificates, no one knows your capacities, you don't have a chance" (personal communication, 23 May 2007). Even certificates obtained after attending a short workshop hold real value to refugees – anything that they feel can give them an edge in finding employment with the NGOs operating in Dadaab (Farah, personal communication, 23 May 2007). It often seems that obtaining certificates is more important to refugees than the education itself.

Yet formal accreditation and certification is a complex issue in Dadaab. It includes placing new arrivals from Somalia in schools and enabling students and teachers to earn certificates which may be recognized and valued in local, foreign and Somali educational institutions and labour markets. CARE has addressed the main certification problem through the adoption of the curriculum of the host state, Kenya. Upon successful completion of primary school, students receive the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), and upon completion of secondary school, they receive the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KSCE) (S. Mohammed, personal communication, 10 May 2007). This solution has implications which will be considered below.

Abdulahi, head teacher at Unduga primary school, reports that approximately 10 per cent of new arrivals from Somalia arrive with certificates from primary or secondary school (A. Mohemed, personal communication, 20 September 2007). These institutions include *madrassas*, private schools and schools funded by NGOs in Somalia, but they are without formal institutional links, especially with regard to

formal accreditation of learning. Many children who have been to school have either lost their certificates or, in haste, left them behind. CARE reviews any certificates they do have, but only as an indication of what the pupil is possibly capable of. All students, regardless of certification from Somalia, are tested upon arrival to place them in the appropriate grade level. The head teacher then gives a recommendation to the parents, which is generally two to three levels lower than the student's certificates indicate (Aden, personal communication, 27 April 2007). Usually the parents accept this recommendation, but sometimes CARE needs to convince them that this is the best solution. Often, pupils are on a par with what their certificates indicate in certain subjects, particularly mathematics and Somali (Aden, personal communication, 27 April 2007), but their English is of such a low level that they still have to be put in a lower grade. CARE's policy not to take certificates from Somalia at face value is also attributed to the fact that there is no centralized education authority in Somalia able to attest to the quality of educational institutions and education facilities and to accredit learning achievements. There also appears to be some evidence that a number of students arrive with forged certificates.

Prior to 1996, the year in which CARE Kenya began implementing the Kenyan curriculum in the camps, the Somali curriculum was taught at primary level. While this had numerous advantages, including a familiar language of instruction, no certification system was established and the system of education was a non-formal, unrecognized one (B. Karanja, personal communication, 8 December 2007). The community decided it would be preferable to adopt the Kenyan system in the camps and the transition was started in a class at Standard 6. Ten boys were the first to graduate from Standard 8 in 1998 with their KCPE examination, which they sat for as private students in Garissa (A. Ibrahim, personal communication, 8 December 2007). These students all continued at secondary level in the County High secondary school in Garissa, as secondary schools had not yet been established in the camps, and took their KCSE examinations in 2002. Midnimo school in Ifo was the first primary school in the camps to be registered as a KCPE examination centre in 1999, and Unity in Dagahaley and Central Primary in Hagadera followed shortly thereafter (B. Karanja, personal communication, 8 December 2007).

In order to be an examination centre, the camp schools had to satisfy a number of criteria set by the Kenyan MoE regarding infrastructure and

number of students and teachers, and had to show that they were following the Kenyan curriculum and syllabus. Between 1996 and 2004 CARE hired a number of teachers with Kenyan university degrees in order to facilitate the transition from the Somali system. In January 2007, 13 more primary schools were registered as examination centres, bringing the total to 16. Because there were few qualified teachers in primary education at this time, CARE's programme manager and education officer had to negotiate with the MoE for an exemption from this particular criterion. In 2000, three secondary schools were established in the camps with approximately 100 students. These schools were registered as KCSE examination centres between 2002 and 2003, and the first students sat for their examinations in 2003. The criteria for secondary schools are much the same as for primary, but the MoE was much more stringent on the issue of qualified teachers, a requirement reflected in the large number of Kenyan national teachers compared to refugee teachers in secondary schools. The MoE sends representatives to the examination centres once a year to monitor both the KCPE and KCSE examinations. It also sends school inspectors throughout the year to monitor teachers' work schemes, teaching methodology, lesson plans, student notes and results from continuous assessment examinations. While the government closely monitors KCPE and KCPE examinations, the responsibility to oversee end of term examinations falls on the school administration.

13.5 Further educational opportunities

Earning the KSCE certificates is particularly advantageous for refugees seeking further education opportunities within Kenya. Denoon notes that scholarships and resettlement are seen as 'golden tickets' by the refugees as a way out of the camps (personal communication, 8 May 2007). *Buufis*, the dream of resettlement, runs strong in the camps (Horst 2006) and any opportunity to get out, even temporarily, is seized. Approximately 50 students are currently attending various colleges in Kenya on full scholarships, supported by UNHCR and its implementing partners (F. Bonelli, 20 April 2007). The certificates they have earned in the formal schools in the camp are easily recognized and validated, as they are identical to those of all students in Kenya. Some are also able to raise funds privately, and a few students have been able to obtain scholarships to study abroad in Canada or the USA. The World University Service for Canada is the main provider of such scholarships, and Windle Trust Kenya screens the candidates prior to selection (P. Boro, personal communication, 22 May 2007). At the time of writing, ten students are

studying at colleges in Canada, with another 11 expected to join them by August 2008. The Kenyan certificates are recognized by the education institutions, but the students need to pass the TOEFL examination with high grades, even though the language of instruction in the camps is English (P. Boro, personal communication, 22 May 2007).

13.6 Teacher certification

Recruiting qualified teachers is a huge challenge in the camps, particularly in primary school. Generally, the teachers hired in primary school are secondary school graduates who have been employed by CARE and given a two-week training course (S. Mohammed, personal communication, 10 May 2007). All of the primary school teachers are 'incentive' teachers (refugees) and almost none are fully qualified with formal certification. Eighteen teachers are currently studying full-time at colleges in Kenya, taking certificate or diploma level courses in teacher training and early childhood development, but the number of certified refugee teachers is not increasing very rapidly (B. Karanja, personal communication, 8 December 2007). Due to resettlement or scholarship opportunities, the few teachers who are certified often leave the camp, which makes planning difficult (F. Wookech, 2007). In secondary school, most of the teachers are qualified and formally certified by Kenyan universities, but this is only because the majority of teachers are Kenyan nationals (S. Mohammed, personal communication, 10 May 2007). UNHCR is looking to train more refugee teachers for secondary education, not only as a way to reduce costs, but, more importantly, to increase the capacity within the community and invest in the future of Somalia (F. Bonelli, personal communication, 12 May 2007).

Approximately 2,000 refugees in 2006 and another 3,000 in 2007 were resettled from Dadaab, mainly to the USA with some to Canada (UNHCR, 2007*b*). Since this study was conducted solely in Kenya, it is difficult to ascertain how the refugees are able to use their certificates in a third country. However, the refugees believe the Kenyan certificates will be more valuable than Somali certificates would have been, due to the language of instruction as well as the high value placed on the Kenyan education system in East Africa (A. Mohemed, personal communication, 10 October 2007). Without more specific information on validation processes in a third country, one can speculate that the Kenyan certificates help to integrate the students in the country of resettlement.

13.7 Looking to the future

While the prospect of repatriation is not currently on the horizon due to the continuing conflict in Somalia, there is a strong need for UNHCR, CARE Kenya and all NGOs currently working with education in south and central Somalia to negotiate the recognition of the schooling certificates from Dadaab prior to repatriation. There is no functioning MoE in Somalia and it is unclear which authorities would be in charge of education once peace is re-established. In this event a tripartite agreement for repatriation between Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR would be drawn up (F. Bonelli, personal communication, 15 November 2007). Bonelli argues that the education sector must be an integral part of this agreement and the recognition of Kenyan certificates should be included in the formal agreements, to allow the direct integration of the refugees into the education system. The refugees – teachers and students – should be given the opportunity to help rebuild the education system with no or little delay (F. Bonelli, personal communication, 15 November 2007). As it stands, however, Somalia is nowhere near this stage and little can be done in terms of negotiation. Furthermore, the schools in Somalia currently use a variety of curricula, complicating both the standardization of certification and planning for this eventuality.

13.8 Conclusions

Given the limited resources and challenging conditions in Dadaab, it is difficult to offer many recommendations for improving the certification processes, but some of the points below highlight possible solutions.

This research has highlighted the need to **streamline the process already in place for integrating new arrivals in the camp into the education system**. For example UNHCR's registration process could develop a direct link with CARE's education sector to facilitate the inclusion of newly-arrived children and youth.

In addition, the role of UNHCR is critical in lobbying the Kenyan government to **increase the education and employment of refugees within Kenya**. This would enable refugee students to use their certificates upon graduation, allowing them to contribute to society and develop their skills.

In order for refugees to obtain certification which is recognized on repatriation, **teacher-training opportunities, both UNHCR/**

CARE-supported and those of the MoE, need to be enhanced and linked into pathways to official certification.

UNHCR and its implementing partners should work with the Kenyan authorities to find ways to adapt the Kenyan curriculum to include more use of the Somali language. For children to repatriate successfully it is essential they are able to perform effectively in the Somali language of instruction.

Once peace is re-established in Somalia and repatriation becomes a viable durable solution, UNHCR needs to **lobby for a mechanism for recognizing Kenyan certificates**. This could be formalized in a tripartite agreement between UNHCR, Kenya and Somalia. This should help to integrate returnee students as well as teachers into the Somali education system and assist in rebuilding the country.

Securing student certification in the Republic of the Congo: International Rescue Committee experience

International Rescue Committee

14.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on an IRC case study conducted in 2005, which drew on internal IRC documents and semi-structured interviews conducted with staff who had been directly involved in student certification. This material has been supplemented with additional research, documentation and communication with former IRC programme staff.[14] The chapter examines the efforts of IRC staff to establish methods to certify refugee student learning in the host country of the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville). It opens with an overview of the political situation in the border area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of the Congo (RoC) and Central African Republic (CAR), drawing attention to the loss of educational opportunities during the border conflict. It describes the processes required for certification of learning and some of the outcomes for the students, and ends with the lessons learned, which also serve as recommendations for other such education programmes.

From February to November 2000, approximately 30,000 refugees fled a conflict in the DRC, crossed the border and took asylum in the District of Bétou, RoC. As the local population in Bétou was small – a third to a quarter of the refugee count - the refugees overwhelmed the host community. There had previously been constant cross-border interaction between the people in the Bétou area and their counterparts across the Oubangui River in DRC. Language and customs are similar, commerce

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14. Rebecca Winthrop led the IRC's internal case studies on certification. The Congo-Brazzaville case study was prepared by Leah Sultan-Khan and Camille Evans. Jackie Kirk conducted further research and revised the study for publication here. Much appreciation is owed to the IRC education teams, including Josh Mafdis and Magali Chelphi-den Hamer. Stephanie Buckland, Sheri Ritsema and Jennifer Sklar also provided invaluable input.

flowed freely and inter-marriage was common. This familiarity and the strong pre-existing relationships helped to integrate the refugees fairly peacefully into the local population, without the establishment of camps.

In May 2001 an attempted coup in the capital of the CAR, Bangui, and the subsequent persecution of the Yakoma ethnic group brought the displacement of urban refugees from Bangui into Bétou, located across the border only 150 miles to the south. While this urban population of 1,000 to 1,500 refugees from CAR shared fewer language and cultural characteristics with the rural Bétou population, they were given many of the same integration opportunities as the refugees from the DRC. There were very few cases of discrimination against refugees from either country throughout the district, although the influx of such a large refugee population inevitably affected the local community.

14.2 Voluntary repatriation

In 2003 and 2004 most of the refugees from CAR volunteered to participate in an UNHCR-assisted repatriation programme. A UNHCR census carried out in June 2004 found an estimated 17,462 individual refugees (5,170 families) living in the area – a drop from the estimated figure of 31,500 refugees in the Bétou District in 2000. This almost 40 per cent reduction in the refugee population was an indication of the trend to repatriation. In November 2004 10,000 DRC refugees returned to the Equateur region from CAR, a movement which set the stage for the first convoy of the DRC caseload of refugees to leave Bétou in April 2005, followed by the return of the DRC refugees living along the Oubangui River in northern RoC. By this time, UNHCR was operational in Equateur, DRC, with offices in Gemena and Libenge. UNHCR's focus for 2005 was to encourage official repatriation to DRC, assuming the security situation did not deteriorate.

14.3 IRC programming in Bétou, the Republic of the Congo, 2001-2005

As the implementing partner of UNHCR, with co-funding from the US Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), IRC implemented activities in Bétou District to serve the needs of refugees and the local residents, in the five sectors of health, education, water and sanitation, gender-based violence and community services. The primary objective was to develop self-sufficiency; IRC worked towards a gradual

reduction in the level of direct programme implementation. Across a relatively large programming area, IRC worked closely with UNHCR, local government departments and the two international organizations present in Bétou – Médecins Sans Frontières and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit. As voluntary repatriation of the refugees from the DRC was under way, IRC phased out direct service delivery in education, gender-based violence and community services by July 2005.

14.4 Background and context of student certification

IRC supported construction and rehabilitation of schools and recruitment of qualified refugee teachers, based on the national education programme of primary, secondary and informal education of the MoE in the DRC. At the height of the programme, 6,000 students were enrolled out of a total refugee population of 17,000 refugees, but by 2004 and 2005 this number had dropped to 4,974. In 2005 IRC was supporting 120 primary teachers and 40 secondary teachers in 18 primary and 5 secondary schools (secondary education was only added to the programme later, and with funding from only one donor). Six additional teachers were working in six adult learning schools. Out of these 166 refugee teachers, 140 were formally qualified. The 13 girls' clubs established within the education programme, involving over 1,200 girls, were evaluated as being particularly successful at reducing drop-out, encouraging attendance at school and broadening their education to include sex education, gender-based violence, children's rights and HIV and AIDS (Dummett and Park, 2005). However, there were serious gender disparities, especially in the higher grades; of the 762 students in secondary education in 2004/2005, only 154 were girls (about 20 per cent).

IRC and UNHCR began to recognize the need for certification in June 2001 as refugee parents expressed dissatisfaction with the informal programme of studies. In response, IRC and UNHCR worked together with education authorities in the country of origin to seek for ways for the students to follow an official curriculum and achieve certification. UNHCR played a leadership role in advocacy and co-ordination at the highest levels, while IRC fulfilled a more technical role at the school and district levels.

14.5 Addressing initial certification needs

A first step was the visit of a UNHCR consultant to Bétou to assess the situation and to identify the processes to be established for student certification, initially for the school year 2001/2002. It was agreed that inspectors from the MoE DRC in Kinshasa would come to Bétou and work with UNHCR and IRC to validate and provide certification for the IRC-supported primary education programme. Refugee students were to take the end of primary school examination offered by the MoE of DRC, their country of origin (an examination called the TENAFEP, or secondary schools entrance examination). Ministry officials would cross the border to administer the examinations for the refugee students still inside the RoC, and their learning and progress through the school system would be recognized when they returned to DRC.

IRC programme records indicate that for the first time, on 19 July 2002, 231 primary school refugee students were entered for the TENAFEP, 51 girls and 180 boys. The examination was supervised by the MoE representatives from Kinshasa who came to Bétou and to the other DRC refugee settlements in northern RoC (Impfondo and Loukoulela) to supervise the examination and take the papers back to Kinshasa.

Although there was some delay in the return of the examination results and no official record of the overall success rate, IRC programme staff recall communication with the ministry staff which indicated a pass rate of about 90 per cent. After this first TENAFEP had taken place and it became possible to plan for subsequent cohorts of students, IRC made efforts to adjust the refugee education programme to the DRC MoE requirements: for example, according to the stipulations of the MoE in Kinshasa the 2002/2003 school year started on 9 September 2002 in the refugee schools.

With the initial efforts for certification focused on the primary completion examination, refugee secondary students were frustrated that their learning programme was still considered informal. Funding was a critical issue, as at the time UNHCR did not support secondary education, and IRC relied on one sole donor to support it. However, from September 2003 on, UNHCR began to provide some technical support for refugee secondary schools. With UNHCR, IRC was then able to work with the ministry officials to secure formal certification for secondary education.

The number of examination candidates initially grew: in 2004, 345 students (242 boys and 103 girls) sat the TENAFEP examination, with a pass rate of 95 per cent. An additional 136 students (128 boys and 8 girls) sat the secondary school examinations. By June 2005, however, although there was a decrease in school enrolment due to repatriation, UNHCR decided to maintain the support for the end of year examinations, and so most families delayed their return until the end of the school year.

The pass rate in the TENAFEP improved, reaching 97 per cent in 2004 and 95 per cent in 2005, rates which exceeded the programme indicator of 80 per cent. At secondary level, it was lower: 53 per cent in 2003, rising to 73 per cent the following year. In addition, although not covered in detail in this case study, IRC and UNHCR collaboration with the MoE in Kinshasa facilitated the certification of 22 refugee teachers.

14.6 Sustainability, repatriation and evolving certification needs

By 2003 IRC was recognizing the need for a shift in programming focus to address the changing political and social situation in the area; the educational needs and priorities of the refugee students also began to change. It seemed then that the refugees would stay in northern RoC for some time, thereby requiring more sustainable integration into local schools. It became clear that for sustainability of education beyond the life of the IRC programme, the students would have to be integrated into the local system. IRC therefore started to work on a parallel integration strategy in which local curricula were integrated into the refugee schools; at the same time, where local schools existed, IRC would encourage the refugee students to enrol. IRC also planned to encourage the host education authorities, the MoE in Brazzaville, to send more teachers to Bétou to help absorb the refugees into the local schools. IRC also requested that the host MoE gradually take responsibility for some of the informal schools in the larger refugee settlements supported by IRC, which also supported local students. Technically this did not create too many problems, as the curricula of the two countries were similar. The main difference between the RoC curriculum and the DRC curriculum is that in the first years of schooling one system uses the local language, Lingala, then French, and for the other system French only is used from the outset.

However, the changing situation in the DRC and the subsequent possibilities for return meant that although liaison with the local education authorities did increase, as did the involvement of the RoC MoE in the district, large-scale integration did not follow. The refugee students continued to complete the DRC curriculum and to sit the DRC examinations. By 2005, however, after the large-scale repatriation efforts, local integration into RoC communities and schools was a more relevant option for the remaining students and their families. Many who opted to remain were already in local schools, and others transferred to them.

14.7 Challenges encountered

The Bétou area is a difficult one to access and to travel within. This geographic isolation created serious logistical challenges to collaboration with the ministry officials in distant Kinshasa. Inspectors had to be flown in, necessitating complicated travel and accommodation arrangements.

Financial constraints were serious, especially when by the end of 2002 UNHCR was faced with reduced resources to operate the same programmes. Teacher stipends had to be cut and efforts stepped up to encourage communities to contribute to teacher salaries. The issue of teacher salaries was a difficult one, and as the programme evaluation suggests, in its strategic thinking, planning and decision-making about the fluctuating donor resources IRC did not handle it well. A number of changes were made in the policy, salaries were raised and cut and changing levels of responsibility for teacher salaries were demanded of the PTAs.

Logistical, administrative and other capacity challenges resulted in considerable delays in publication of examination results and distribution of certificates to the students. For example, the first examination results were to be made available in August 2002, but this did not in fact happen.

14.8 Successes and strengths

In interviews conducted in 2005, IRC staff identified positive elements of the programme relevant to the certification processes, including the good intra-organizational relationship between the IRC education programmes in Bétou and Kinshasa. Communication between the two offices was frequent, with a flow of information, questions and responses back and forth. Building on its global experience in the

area of certification, IRC's headquarters-based technical team planned support for Bétou-based staff to help them work with local partners to develop and implement a certification strategy. An exchange visit with West Africa programmes, where these issues were being addressed, was organized for IRC education staff. Good relations and exchange with other IRC programmes continued after the visit.

There was also good cross-border communication and provision of supplies, training and logistical co-ordination with UNHCR at the regional level; UNHCR was critical in the liaison with the MoE in Kinshasa. Although there may have been some tensions at higher management levels, at the local level good personal relations also existed between IRC education staff and their UNHCR counterparts.

IRC's promotion and support for formal recognition of learning was also strengthened by PTA capacity building efforts and other community-based educational initiatives for all refugees, such as the girls' clubs. At the height of the programme there were 23 PTAs in the district, each organizing at least one meeting every term, and each supported by additional training and other capacity building opportunities.

14.9 Conclusions and organizational lessons learned

With hindsight one can see that earlier contact with the local authorities may have been an important step, not only in facilitating official relations with the Ministry representatives in the DRC but also in simplifying integration into the local system for the refugees who opted not to return. More strategic thinking and planning about teacher salary issues would have produced a smoother transition between refugee programming and sustainable education provision in the Bétou area, and could have strengthened the PTAs' capacity to address teacher salary deficits.

Overall, IRC recognizes that for all involved the value of these activities was greatly enhanced by the opportunities created for the formal recognition of learning by the authorities. This was acknowledged by parents, teachers and students as well as programme staff. Continued access to the curriculum of the country of origin and to the state examinations for final year primary and secondary school pupils, including the delivery of examination certificates, was identified by external evaluators as having a very positive impact and facilitating re-entry to education for repatriating students (Dummett and Park 2005).

The final programme evaluation also notes the high examination pass rates and the appreciation of students and teachers of IRC's facilitation of the DRC examinations:

> "The decision to create special schools following the DRC curriculum was obviously the right one and has been greatly appreciated by teachers, parents and pupils ... Local Congolese children were not excluded from the IRC schools, although only a few (those living in areas with very poor access to local schools) chose to attend the refugee schools. This program could even be said to have had a positive impact on local education in that the MoE has recently started constructing two new primary schools in sites where local children attended refugee schools" (Dummett and Park 2005: 22).

At the same time, IRC was assuming that most refugees would return home and in hindsight should have been able to foresee, or at least be prepared for, a shift in perspective. When the situation changed, IRC had to respond quickly and find ways to shift the certification authority to the host education authorities.

Chapter 15

Educational attainments of Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire (1992-2007): reflections on certification, equivalence and informal schooling for refugees

Magali Chelpi-den Hamer

15.1 Introduction

Preston (1994) defines refugee education in developing countries as the product of three factors:

- refugees articulate certain demands in the host country;
- UNHCR, government and non-governmental actors offer responses;
- the host government has its own views on how to handle refugee caseloads and shapes the legal framework accordingly.

There is no single blueprint, and there seem to be as many forms of refugee education as there are different contexts. Yet whatever form it takes, it inevitably raises the issue of equivalence between two educational systems. If the content is largely based on the refugees' home country system, how will the learning be assessed and valued in the host country should some refugees opt for local integration? If it is largely based on the host country system, returnees may experience difficulties in getting their education recognized in their home country (Buckland, 2006; Sesnan, 1999). Diplomas, certificates of achievement, progress report sheets and school booklets are usually part of the educational package in any given system, but what happens when a student shifts from one system to another? Is there a certain form of grade equivalence between the two?

Here I draw on the case of Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire to reflect on fifteen years of educational provision.[15] What type(s) of education have been available to Liberian refugees and how has this changed over time? Why was a parallel system of non-formal education set up in the beginning? What issues of equivalence and certification arose when the decision was made to shift to a formal system? To what extent have these issues been tackled? The study covers the period 1992-2007 and is based on documents, 'grey literature' collected on site and interviews with key informants. Respondents included former refugee students, parents, refugee school principals, teachers, Ivorian educational officials and INGO representatives.

15.2 Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire

Liberians were crossing the border to Côte d'Ivoire long before the start of the Liberian civil war in 1989. There are strong ethnic, social and economic links between the two countries; intermarriage is frequent and people would cross over for market days, contractual work in the plantations or to visit family or friends.

At the end of the 1980s, civil war erupted in Liberia and people started fleeing to the neighbouring countries. Some 70,000 Liberians crossed the Ivorian border between December 1989 and March 1990, and by the end of 1990 there were 272,000 Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire. At first, the Ivorian policy was generally positive, largely based on the expectation that the Liberian civil war would not last. Liberians were seen as 'brothers in distress' and accepted as refugees on a *prima facie* basis – the mere fact of being Liberian was enough to be granted refugee status and given asylum (Kuhlman, 2002; Niamke, 2005). Rather than favouring their settlement in camps, former President Houphouët-Boigny encouraged them to settle freely among the Ivorian population. Most refugees settled just across the border, within the

boundaries of the *Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés* (ZAR).[16] The main advantage was that they shared similar characteristics with their hosts (in terms of rural background, ethnic group, language and habits), which eased social interactions. Refugees were generally allowed to farm and work provided they complied with local arrangements (Kuhlman, 2002; Niamke, 2005).

The Ivorian Red Cross and Caritas were the first to provide refugees with basic assistance. UNHCR stepped in and became fully operational in 1991 (Kuhlman, 2002; Niamke, 2005). A collaboration agreement was signed between the government of Côte d'Ivoire and the UNHCR in February 1992 and UNHCR was granted permission to open an office (MAE/UNHCR, 1992). Most refugee education was undertaken by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), UNHCR's implementing partner for emergency education.

In the 1990s, numbers fluctuated as the situation in Liberia worsened or improved and the public perception of Liberian refugees drastically shifted. Refugees were staying longer than expected, they were an additional weight on already strained local resources, and the Taï incident in June 1995 had shown that they could be a real threat to their hosts[17] (International Crisis Group, 2004). After 1999, Liberians were no longer accepted as refugees on a *prima facie* basis and had to apply individually for refugee status. Newcomers who wished to qualify for UNHCR assistance were requested to settle at the refugee camp of Nicla, near Guiglo (Kuhlman, 2002). *Table 15.1* presents the changes in the refugee caseload during the period from 1996 to 2005.

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16. The ZAR consisted of four departments bordering Liberia in the west and south-west of Côte d'Ivoire – Danané, Toulepleu, Guiglo and Tabou.
17. The Ivorian town of Taï was used as a launch pad for organizing violent raids across the border on the Liberian side. In June 1995, armed groups from Liberia attacked the town and thousands of Ivorians were forced to flee to safer areas. Given that several refugees who had settled in and around Taï had been involved in these cross-border raids, the Ivorian government decided to shift from a 'no camp' policy into a policy of organized settlement, to prevent further retaliation. A refugee camp was created near Guiglo, relatively far from the border, to host the refugees who used to live in Taï. However, spontaneous settlement along the Liberian-Ivorian border continued to remain the norm for Liberian newcomers between 1995 and 1999 (Kuhlman, 2002).

Table 15.1   Refugee caseload in Côte d'Ivoire, 1996-2005

Origin	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Liberia	327,288	207,014	148,910	135,649	117,749	122,846	43,000	74,180	70,402	39,919
RoC	-	-	94	357	453	510	575	583	539	560
Sierra Leone	-	1,089	1,596	1,773	1,779	2,116	360	334	339	339
Rwanda	160	132	231	266	258	287	302	304	257	247
DRC	-	17	31	61	87	140	150	181	192	207

Source: UNHCR, 2005

What makes the Ivorian case interesting is that UNHCR phased out assistance twice: the first time between 1997 and 1999 after the end of the first Liberian civil war, and the second time after 2005, following the end of the second conflict.[18] Were lessons learned from the first phasing out applied to the second one? The following sections describe the types of education made available to Liberian refugees over the entire period.

15.3 From 1992 to 1999: wide adhesion to a parallel education system

A report commissioned by the UNHCR evaluation and policy analysis unit in 2002 deplored the fact that UNHCR policy in Côte d'Ivoire was unsuited to local integration from the beginning: firstly, it continued care and maintenance for too long, and secondly, it set up an unsustainable parallel education system which forced UNHCR to largely abandon refugee children when it phased out in 1999 (Kuhlman, 2002). Given that the Ivorian government had shown relative openness toward Liberian refugees and willingness to comply with its obligations under the Geneva Convention, this was interpreted as a missed opportunity. In this section, analysis shows that local integration was not an option at the beginning of the 1990s.

A mix of rationales was advanced in the early 1990s to support setting up informal schools for Liberian refugees.

• From the parents' perspective, sticking to the Liberian curriculum was all the more important as the other option, shifting to the Ivorian curriculum, meant a switch from English to French as prime language of instruction. Given that the anglophone culture was valued by Liberians and the American way of life was viewed as a model by many, parents feared that their children would lose

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18.   The first Liberian civil war ended in 1996 and was followed by a period of relative stability. In 1999, a second civil war started which came to an end in 2003.

both their ability to speak English and their cultural identity if they enrolled in Ivorian schools. Also, not knowing the language, parents would have been unable to follow what their children were learning at school (Niamke, 2005).

- Age limit was cited as a constraint by refugee youngsters who wished to continue their education in Côte d'Ivoire. Ivorian schools were not accepting children above 12 years old in Grade 1 and above 15 in Grade 6. There was no such limit in the Liberian system (Niamke, 2005).

- From a more pedagogical perspective, Liberian teachers argued, not without reason, that Liberian students, especially the ones enrolled in the higher grades, would have difficulties in integrating into French-speaking classrooms, and hence needed an English language education.

- The Ivorian government anticipated difficulty in integrating a massive influx of Liberian children into the existing infrastructure, given that there were already not enough schools in the ZAR to meet all the Ivorian demands for education. It was therefore not opposed to the setting up of refugee schools, especially since it did not expect this parallel system to last long-term.

- The UNHCR perspective lacked clarity in the beginning. In early 1991, it made a plan to have refugee children absorbed into Ivorian schools, but this never materialized and refugee schools were created instead (Kuhlman, 2002). Why this initial idea was never implemented is unclear. I can only guess that given the lack of infrastructure in the ZAR, the government was reluctant to support a choice in programming that would have negatively affected access to education for Ivorian residents. From a more practical perspective, UNHCR may have chosen not to add another source of tension to an already stressful situation, and if the most vocal refugees wanted to stick to an education system they knew, the wisest move was probably to support existing initiatives.

Some rationales were more emphasized than others (the lack of infrastructure is likely to have weighed the most heavily in 1992 in the decision to set up a parallel system of education), but in the end there was wide agreement to non-formal education by all actors. This situation triggered a form of humanitarian assistance which conferred legitimacy on a parallel education system in Côte d'Ivoire using the Liberian curriculum.

A common mistake is to assume that refugees follow a similar path, including a similar educational trajectory, and hence that they can all benefit from a standard assistance package. In fact, multiple patterns exist. Some refugees might choose to return to their country of origin after some time, others might decide to settle where they are, and others might move on elsewhere. They might enrol in informal schools upon arrival, or choose to integrate into local schools, or simply drop out. This multiplicity of options is rarely taken into account in the design of assistance, and UNHCR support for refugee education usually takes a unitary form. This case study is no exception. There was no single educational pattern for Liberian refugees: some enrolled in the ADRA refugee schools upon arrival, some went to Ivorian schools and registered in first grade, some went to private and/or faith-based institutions and some simply dropped out. Yet support for refugee education took a single form, based on the most common educational path.

In 1992, ADRA started providing primary and secondary education free of charge to refugee children. In 1996-1997, they were serving 75,000 children: 65,000 at primary level and 10,000 at secondary level (ADRA, 1998). The bulk of the teaching was done in English, using the Liberian curriculum, and schools were staffed by professional teachers and volunteers with certain academic requirements. (Volunteer staff had usually at least completed Grade 9 to teach at primary school level, and Grade 12 to teach at secondary school level.) In rural areas, classrooms were built using temporary materials (mud, wood and papoo). In urban areas, buildings were rented. 'Home-made' end of year examinations validated the learning for Grades 1 to 8 and 10 to 11 and allowed students to go to the next levels in the ADRA schools. Grades 9 and 12 students were encouraged to take the WAEC examination (Dillard, 2003). For post-secondary education, UNHCR offered a few scholarships to the most deserving students.

In 1994, technical education was undertaken by the German Cooperation and several vocational schools were opened in the main towns of the ZAR (Danané, Guiglo and Tabou). These schools were initially created to offer skills training to out-of-school refugees and were mainly staffed by refugees. In practice, they were open to everyone, and many Ivorian youngsters got free vocational training by enrolling in these institutions. The schools provided short training courses in electricity, mechanics, carpentry, masonry and accounting. They delivered certificates of participation for six-month courses, certificates

of achievement for nine-month courses and certificates of proficiency for eighteen-month courses. These were not formally recognized under the Ivorian system, but the certificate of proficiency was largely perceived by local entrepreneurs as being equivalent to the *Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* diploma (usually delivered after two or three years of technical education in a given skill); several graduates could therefore practice their skills in the local economy. Entry requirements varied over time. In the beginning, having completed secondary school was necessary to enter these schools, and students had to hold the WAEC Senior School Certificate. After a few years, entry rules were relaxed and everybody could enrol. Different groups were created: students who could not read or write only did practical training; those with basic literacy skills were taught practice and a bit of theory; for students who had gone to junior or senior secondary school, the learning was more theoretical than practical.

The interview fragment below is a good illustration of the internationally-driven education set in place in the 1990s to respond to the refugee situation. It is illuminating in two ways. On the one hand, it shows that such education provision enabled a number of refugees to go quite far in their schooling and to get valuable practical skills that they can use for finding work today. Francis completed his secondary education in the ADRA refugee schools, then started masonry at T-Tech, the vocational school in Tabou, and currently earns his living using this skill. On the other hand, it shows how refugees have to adapt to changes in response, not necessarily the way they want. They have little leverage for shaping a response that is supposedly geared to answering their needs, and they seem to endure change rather than to participate in it.

With the end of the first Liberian war and the start of UNHCR's repatriation programme, a large number of refugees repatriated to Liberia between 1997 and 1999. There was little funding available for the remaining caseload, and budget cuts led UNHCR to rethink its response in terms of refugee assistance. The Ivorian government was pushed to accept the idea of local integration for the remaining caseload. The following section describes the main difficulties such a shift generated.

15.4 From 1999 to 2001: resisting change

Local integration meant the end of refugee schools, the integration of the remaining children into existing Ivorian structures and a switch from a parallel system to formal education. It was defined as "allowing

refugee children to have access to primary education under the same conditions as nationals" (Ministry of Education, 2001*b*). It was aimed at refugee children who were likely to stay in Côte d'Ivoire after 2000 and who were not listed for resettlement in a third country, and was initially scheduled to happen in the autumn of 1999 after Liberian children had taken three months of intensive French. It was eventually delayed two years, due to many difficulties in implementation.

"I was 23 in 1994 when I arrived in Côte d'Ivoire. I settled in Boubele. I used to go to school in Liberia, I was in Grade 8, but there was no secondary school in Boubele, it was a small village. So I was forced to enrol to Grade 6 ... I did not know anyone in Tabou where the secondary schools were, so I could not stay there at first. After a while, I managed to stay at a friend's place, and I could enrol in Grade 8 in the ADRA junior secondary school in Tabou ... In 1999, I took the Grade 12 WAEC exam and I passed. It took a long time to receive our diplomas because of security problems in Liberia but I finally got mine in April 2000 ... At about the same period, the UN said that we now had to integrate and the ADRA schools were closed down. Primary students were asked to enrol into Ivorian schools and if secondary students like us wanted to continue schooling, they had to do so in Liberia ... I did not want to go back. I had lost both of my parents in the conflict, and I had nothing in Liberia, no property. I did not know anyone who could help me, to get to Ghana for instance, to go to university ... So after finishing high school, I stayed in Tabou. I was tutoring several students who were attending private refugee schools. When those schools closed down, I entered the bush and I started fixing charcoal to make a living ... Eventually, T-Tech re-opened in 2005. I had to make a few savings first to be able to pay for my expenses after I would re-enter school, so I joined T-Tech in March 2006 and started studying general construction. I did a 9-month course and I got a certificate of achievement in October 2006. I wanted to go on and continue to proficiency but T-Tech closed and I could not continue ... Presently, I work with masons. Because most of the training at T-Tech was theoretical, I now want to practice the theory. I do not refuse the job, I like it, even if masons do not always give me the money they owe me."

(Francis A., personal communication, April 2007)

In terms of pedagogical content, there are no major differences in the two systems except the use of a different language of instruction. Both Liberian and Ivorian systems avoid the use of local languages in the lower grades, and children learn French or English at school without necessarily practising it at home. In both systems, primary school lasts

six years and each level's content is more or less equivalent (Tchagbalé, 2001). Three national examinations are held in the Ivorian system at primary and secondary level, and two in the Liberian system.[19]

In 1999, Liberian children were expected to switch from English to French as language of instruction. Such a shift was likely to have less impact on the youngest children but raised serious concerns for students who already had a few years of schooling in the refugee schools. The main pitfall indeed was that they risked being set back a few years in their education when switching to the Ivorian system.

In addition to pedagogical concerns, there were also some logistical issues: the timing was too tight, refugees were informed in June 1999 of the plan to integrate in October the same year, and there were too few teachers and insufficient infrastructure to absorb all children. One can only wonder why the option for integration was rushed given such unpreparedness. To give a few figures, it was anticipated that 20,000 Liberian children would integrate and estimated costs amounted to US$16 million (ADRA, 1999b; IRIN, 2001). This included the building of 450 classrooms, 250 teachers' housing units, sanitation and canteen facilities, the costs of hiring and training teachers, monthly salaries (US$127 per month) and the purchase of teaching equipment (IRIN, 2001).

Côte d'Ivoire could not face this situation alone. Yet, as government officials kept stating that Ivorian schools were financially unprepared to absorb 20,000 Liberian children, donors were slow to commit to a share of the cost (Ministry of Education, 2001*f*; US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 1999).

Until the last minute, it was unclear how children would integrate, and the modalities of implementation remained vague. Was UNHCR expecting the youngest Liberian children to enrol in the first two levels of the Ivorian system (CP1 and CP2)? That would have meant finding places for an additional 9,000 students, a quite unrealistic prospect given the existing Ivorian educational infrastructure (ADRA, 1999*b*). Since the 1999/2000 school year was quickly approaching and there was as yet no plan to build additional classrooms in the existing Ivorian schools, ADRA

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19. The CEPE is held at the end of Grade 6 (*Certificat d'étude primaire élémentaire*), the BEPC at the end of Grade 9 (*Brevet d'études du premier cycle*) and the Baccalaureate at the end of Grade 12, opening the door to post-secondary education. In the Liberian system, the Junior High School Certificate is held at the end of Grade 9 and the Senior High School Certificate at the end of Grade 12.

suggested using the existing refugee schools for the year 1999/2000 and to start building additional structures to prepare for the absorption of the Liberian children into the Ivorian schools in 2000/2001.

"In collaboration with the Ivorian government, we matched Ivorian schools statistics with our estimates of Liberian children who were likely to be integrated into Ivorian schools ... We then compared the statistics with the capacity of the existing structures and it came out that there is a general lack of classrooms and teachers to absorb them all. We estimate that there is a need to build 444 additional classrooms and to hire 517 primary and secondary school teachers to cover all the needs ... Most of the additional infrastructure is aimed at integrating refugee children in the two first grades of the Ivorian system, CP1 and CP2. Given that these two levels are already overcrowded in most Ivorian schools, additional classrooms are needed at CP1 and CP2 level for facilitating the integration of refugee children ... The situation is quite different for the other levels. In rural areas, there are fewer children enrolled in the higher levels and there are even fewer refugees likely to enrol. The existing structures are therefore nearly enough to absorb all refugees" (ADRA, 1999*d*).

It was eventually decided not to switch directly to local integration but to adopt a one-year transition period. ADRA schools were used during that time, which meant that refugees could still be educated in areas where there were no Ivorian schools, but concrete measures were slow to come and the one-year transition period became a two-year transition phase. Even then, at the start of the 2001/2002 school year, many Liberians were still resisting the mere idea of local integration. Transition had failed to ease the shift from one system to another.

Why did the transition fail? In the beginning of the first year of transition (1999/2000), refugee schools were not operated as they had been before. The idea was to "initiate refugee children to the Ivorian curriculum by using French as teaching language", and French became the main language of instruction (UNHCR, 2001*b*). Most of the Liberian teaching staff did not have their contracts renewed; francophone educators were hired to help diffuse French language in everyday teaching practice. In September 2001, after two years of transition, less than five per cent of the expected number of Liberian children enrolled in Ivorian schools (UNHCR, 2002). The number increased slightly after sensitization

campaigns on the subject were introduced (UNHCR, 2001*c*), but local integration was hardly successful and only a minority of Liberians opted for it (2,700 children vs. the expected 20,000). Several factors might explain why the transition failed.

Firstly, most teaching staff in the transition schools were not qualified teachers and had limited pedagogical skills. They were hired by ADRA in December 1999 and went through a one-week accelerated teacher training. They were not bilingual, yet they were put into the difficult position of facilitating the integration of English-speaking students into French-speaking classrooms. The assumption behind was that by teaching an adjusted Ivorian curriculum for a year, it would be easier to integrate the Liberian students into the Ivorian equivalent grades the following year. Such a plan was unlikely to succeed without good pedagogical follow-up.

The number of school-age children in the ZAR had significantly increased in certain areas due to the displacements of population and the emergence of rural hubs which did not exist before the refugee influx. Despite these population dynamics, the *carte scolaire* remained unchanged in the 1990s, although the number of Ivorian schools no longer matched the number of school-age children in the ZAR. There was no Ivorian school in Gozon or in Nero Village, in the region of Tabou, and when ADRA schools closed down for good there, in 2001, access to education became problematic. Integration may partly have failed because no realistic alternative was found for ensuring the continuity of education in places where Ivorian schools were non-existent or simply too far to reach.

In terms of infrastructure, despite repeated indications by the Ivorian government that it would not be able to absorb all refugee children into the existing schools, financial support for building up additional classrooms did not arrive until late 2001, when UNHCR finally committed to fund the construction of 90 classrooms (UNHCR, 2001*b*). Such an announcement would have been expected at a much earlier stage, given the number of Liberian children who had to integrate, the limited number of places available in Ivorian schools and the unavoidable delay between words and action. In July 2002, three years after the start of the transition phase, only 55 per cent of the 90 classrooms were completed (Ministry of Education, 2002).

Between 1992 and 2001, UNHCR bore the bulk of the costs of refugee education, but the funds were mainly allocated to teachers' salaries and basic school equipment for the ADRA schools. There was no budget available for strengthening the capacity of existing Ivorian schools. In hindsight, we can only regret this lack of anticipation in planning.

Last but not least, many refugees resisted integration. The same mix of rationales advanced in the early 1990s resurfaced in 1999-2001 to favour the continuation of refugee schools. Parents feared acculturation and the loss of English because of the use of French in the classroom, and teachers argued that the language switch would have a negative impact on students' performance. New rationales were also brought up in 1999. Refugees were particularly unhappy not to have been consulted before the decision to shift to integration was made. They strongly felt that they had no choice and that integration was imposed on them. Driven by a certain willingness to preserve their freedom to choose which education system would fit them best, they made a series of propositions to UNHCR. They suggested that a careful assessment be done to determine who would be affected by integration, and that integration only target refugee students who wished to stay in Côte d'Ivoire for a long period of time, while other alternatives should be found for those who planned to return to Liberia (UNHCR, 1999*a*). They also suggested that bilingual educators be hired in schools where refugee children would integrate. This was quite a hint in favour of multiple responses for refugee education. Their recommendations were listened to but not really taken into account. UNHCR-driven support for refugee education limited itself to a single option, and refugees who did not want local integration were simply told to find other sponsors if they wished to continue their education under the Liberian system (UNHCR, 1999*b*).

Liberian teachers were among the most vocal opponents of this shift. They were losing many privileges in the process – their jobs, their main source of income, food rations from the closing of World Food Programme school canteens and a degree of prestige among their peers. Not surprisingly, they were keen to defend their status. Some of the former ADRA staff who did not get rehired during the transition phase sued the INGO over payroll and benefit issues (ADRA, 1999*c*). Some engaged in 'counter-campaigns' of information to discourage parents from sending their children to Ivorian schools, and some created parallel schools,

which continued to teach the Liberian curriculum without authorization from the Ivorian educational authorities.

It would however be misleading to limit teachers' mobilization to the defense of vested rights. Some of them genuinely believed that integration was a mistake under the proposed conditions. The timing was short, the new teaching workforce inexperienced, the needed infrastructure non-existent, and too little pedagogical attention had been given to the issue of equivalence between the two educational systems. Having realized that integration was unavoidable, several refugee teachers lobbied for a gradual phase-out over several years, from 2001 onwards, during which, every new intake of Grade 1 pupils would enter Ivorian schools, while only the pupils enrolled in higher grades in 2001 would continue in the Liberian system. The Ivorian government was also in favour of such a gradual change, one of the central arguments being that parents should not be forced to opt for local integration. It suggested that the ADRA system be maintained for a longer transition period, and then taken on by private Liberian schools officially registered at the MoE for continuing to provide education to refugees who did not wish to "integrate" (Ministry of Education, 2001*e*).

This gradual transition was never implemented. In August 2001, an agreement protocol was eventually signed between the Ivorian government and UNHCR, under which the government committed to support local integration by directly integrating the youngest refugee children in Grade 1 in Ivorian schools (provided the absorption capacity was enough) and by placing children enrolled in higher grades at equivalent levels (Ministry of Education, 2001*a*). In practice, there was no standard by which to assess refugees' educational attainments when they switched to Ivorian schools, ad hoc equivalence was the norm at the primary level, and pupils' levels were valued differently depending on context. The bulk of the Liberian children were directly put into the first two grades, regardless of the number of years of primary schooling they had had in the refugee system. Rather than 'integrating' into the Ivorian system, Liberian children were in fact often restarting their schooling from scratch.

In some cases, students were given the opportunity to catch up a few years if they performed better than their schoolmates, and if they were lucky (having the right teacher and an open-minded school director). "I remember two children from Liberia. When they came to our school, we

had them take a test. One was put in CP1 [Grade 1]; the other was placed in CP2 [Grade 2]. After a few weeks, the teacher came to see me. He told me that the child in CP2 was doing very well and he suggested that he skip a level. We placed him in the following grade, in CE1" (Pedagogic counsellor in Tabou, personal communication, April 2007). In other cases, students were simply set back a few years in their education with the likely consequence that they would drop out if they could not afford the cost of restarting their schooling from scratch.

The abrupt ending of support for secondary education had major consequences for older students. While UNHCR had planned to facilitate Liberian children's integration into Ivorian primary schools, it had surprisingly made no plan for secondary school students. Refugee secondary education officially disappeared from the picture after 2000, once again sidelined by an international agenda which focused too much on primary education (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2007).

During the first transition year (1999/2000), support for secondary education was downsized to a minimum. UNHCR limited its support to Grade 9 and 12 students enrolled in the ADRA schools, and helped 1,600 students to sit the WAEC examination to obtain Junior and Senior High School Certificates (UNHCR, 1999*c*). The examinations were held in May 2000, and UNHCR supplied the necessary financial and logistical support, including the payment of students' examination fees.

Those who were not enrolled in an examination class had very few options and were mainly on their own if they wanted to continue schooling. Direct integration in secondary Ivorian institutions was not possible. No agreement protocol was signed between the Ivorian government and UNHCR for secondary education, and a very high level of written French proficiency was required at these levels (which students usually lacked). What were their options? They could either drop out, or go back to Liberia, or move to a neighbouring anglophone country to continue schooling (provided they had financial means and supportive sponsors), or enrol in one of the private institutions run by refugee teachers which replaced the ADRA secondary schools (closed down in 1999). These 'écoles clandestines', as they were commonly labelled, offered an opportunity to continue secondary education under the Liberian curriculum, at Grades 7 to 12. Not surprisingly they came as a relief to many Liberian students who had already invested a lot in

their education. These schools were not receiving external assistance; they were mainly funded by parents' contributions and tuition fees.

When it was clear that UNHCR was not planning to automatically repeat its support for Grades 9 and 12 students in 2000/2001, several representatives of these 'écoles clandestines' approached ADRA and UNHCR staff in early 2001 and asked for support to facilitate sitting the WAEC examination. Demands usually took the form of rather desperate calls: "Your Excellency, we beg that you kindly use your influence to have our children sit for this all important examination at least for the period 2000/2001, by underwriting the cost" (Liberian Refugee Community, 2000). From UNHCR internal correspondence, we can see that there was no clear policy to answer such requests, and opinions conflicted as to the most strategic attitude to adopt. Some UNHCR staff even feared that answering such demands favourably would jeopardize the broader project of integration. Ad hoc responses were eventually formulated, the main advantage being the continuation of the provision of short-term relief for Grades 9 and 12 students, but the clear disadvantage being that of diverging from the official line. In 1999, the central UNHCR administration had made clear that secondary education had come to an end and that refugees who wished to continue their education under the Liberian system had to find other sponsors (UNHCR, 1999*b*). But in early 2001, the UNHCR Côte d'Ivoire representative emailed her colleagues in Liberia, Guinea, and Ghana about ways to have 846 Liberian students sit the WAEC examination in May the same year (UNHCR, 2001*a*).[20]

The parallel efforts of the 'écoles clandestines' should not be underestimated. In March 2001, four refugee schools (Tabou Bilingual Educational Complex, the Private Refugee Education Secondary School of Tabou, the United Christian Faith Church Institute in Guiglo and the Dr. R.B. Kowa Memorial Night School in Tabou) wrote to the MoE in Monrovia and requested support to have their students sit the Grade 9 and 12 WAEC examination. On 6 March 2001 the deputy minister of education passed their request to the head of the WAEC office in

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20. On the part of UNHCR, it was a rather last minute attempt to have the educational attainments of the students certified. A formal request had been made to the WAEC Registrar in Accra, Ghana, in early 2001; budgetary provisions had been made at country level to cover the examination costs; and a mock exam was organized in Spring 2001 to check the level of the students who had gone through the 'écoles clandestines'. Students who passed the mock exam qualified for UNHCR assistance and their exam fees were paid.

Monrovia, and on 7 March 2001 he received a favourable reply: students were allowed to sit the examinations in Harper, in Maryland County, just over the border, provided the schools arranged the necessary logistics for students and examination administrators (the schools had previously agreed to transport the candidates to Harper). Also, as the registration date had passed, the WAEC office in Monrovia granted a grace period of two weeks to have the candidates registered.

Interestingly, UNHCR and refugees' communication lines ran separately. To judge by the correspondence available, UNHCR Côte d'Ivoire did not seem to have liaised much with Liberian institutions; its main contact was the WAEC Registrar office in Accra. In contrast, Liberian educational district officials, the Liberian MoE and the WAEC office in Monrovia were the main interlocutors for the 'écoles clandestines'. In 2002, when UNHCR reiterated its support for facilitating the examinations in Côte d'Ivoire despite the fact that the Liberian MoE had officially suspended the giving of WAEC examinations to Liberian refugees outside Liberia after 2000, it did not inform the MoE in Liberia. Instead, it requested the WAEC registrar office in Accra to authorize the administration of the 2002 examination in Tabou "because of the lack of adequate resources to cover transportation to Maryland, feeding and lodging expenses" (Ministry of Education [Liberia], 2002). The chairman of an 'école clandestine' informed the MoE in Liberia. Then, the MoE eventually agreed to have the examinations held in Côte d'Ivoire, requesting the head of the Liberian WAEC office to make the necessary arrangements.

What is strikingly inconsistent in this case are the repeated attempts to rescue Grades 9 and 12 students by having them sit the WAEC examination in 1999/2000, 2000/2001 and 2001/2002, compared to the lack of attention given to students in Grades 7, 8, 10 and 11. The next section presents another inconsistent response. Following the resumption of fighting in Liberia, 40,000 Liberians crossed the border to Côte d'Ivoire in 2003 and settled in the region of Tabou. The decision to restore refugee schools came rather unexpectedly. It had been so difficult to introduce the idea of integrating refugee children into Ivorian schools in 1999-2001 that one can only wonder why it was adopted for such a small influx: 75,000 children were benefiting from refugee education in 1997 (ADRA, 1999*a*), with only a few thousand in 2003 (IRC, 2004).

15.5 From 2003 to 2007: lessons not learned

If lessons had been learned from the 1990s, parents would have been advised to enrol their youngest children in the lower grades in Ivorian schools, private refugee schools would have been the alternative for parents who were not comfortable having their children follow the Ivorian curriculum, and UNHCR would have supported secondary school education to avoid serious certification problems for Liberian youngsters and to limit drop-outs. Sadly, lessons were not learned. Refugee schools were set up in 2003, but only at the primary level, and the option of direct integration for the youngest children was not promoted.

The IRC was UNHCR's implementing partner for refugee education during that period. It started organizing recreational activities for refugee children in villages where newcomers had settled, and such activities gradually evolved to become a parallel system of education largely based on the Liberian curriculum. In early 2004, 1,600 children were enrolled in the informal schools, most of them very young (IRC, 2004).

In practice, it was difficult to make the distinction between the 2003 newcomers and the remaining caseload from 1999. It is therefore more than likely than the 'integrated' refugees also benefited from the assistance geared at the newcomers. Mary's case is particularly interesting. Between 1998 and 2006, she went through four educational institutions: an ADRA school, a private refugee recreational centre, an IRC school and a private Ivorian institution. *Figure 15.1* presents an overview of her educational trajectory. She alternated periods of schooling with periods of non-schooling before eventually integrating into the Ivorian system in Grade 6 (CM2). While a normal trajectory would have enabled her to complete primary schooling in 2004, she lost three years in the process and completed the primary cycle in 2007.

Why did Mary integrate into the Ivorian system in 2006 and not in 2001? The most likely reason is a financial one. The person who had her under custody was jobless between 2001 and 2004 and hence unable to support the costs associated with the shift to the formal system. Another point that deserves attention is that in 2006, Mary directly enrolled in Grade 6 in the Ivorian system, as recommended in her IRC progress report card. This is rather unusual: firstly, pedagogical advice offered by non-formal educational institutions is rarely followed by formal schools; secondly, examination classes are traditionally the most difficult to get into, as they reflect the general performance of the school in the national statistics.

Figure 15.1 Mary's education trajectory (1999-2007)

This is Certify that **Mary**
Has /~~has not~~ Completed the work of
Grade: **FOUR**
And is

a) Promoted to Grade **FIVE (5)**
b) Retained in Grade
c) Conditionally passed to Grade

Class Sponsor
Principal
Parent / Guardian
Date **11-07-04**

REFUGEE CHILDREN
RECREATIONAL CENTER
COTE D'IVOIRE

STUDENT'S PROGRESS GRADE SHEET
NAME OF CENTER **Recreational Center - Bribebe**
NAME OF STUDENT **Mary**
GRADE: **4** YEAR **2004**
CLASS SPONSOR **EMMANUEL K**

This Grade Sheet is designed to identify Student who have fully participated at the REFUGEE CHILDREN RECREATIONAL CENTER as an Official record of their grade level, Academic Word and conduct while at the Center. This grade sheet is designed to enable the re-entry of these refugee children into the Ivorian School System.

L'Abidjanaise

Salut, ô terre d'espérance,
Pays de l'hospitalité,
Tes légions remplies de vaillance,
Ont relevé ta dignité,
Tes fils, chère Côte d'Ivoire,
Fiers artisans de ta grandeur,
Tous rassemblés pour ta gloire,
Te bâtiront dans le bonheur,
Fiers Ivoiriens, le Pays nous appelle,
Si nous avons dans la paix
Ramené la liberté,
Notre devoir sera d'être un modèle
De l'espérance promise à l'humanité
En forgeant unis dans la foi nouvelle
La patrie de la vraie fraternité.

REPUBLIQUE DE COTE D'IVOIRE
UNION – DISCIPLINE – TRAVAIL

MINISTERE DE L'EDUCATION NATIONALE
I.E.P. TABOU
Année Scolaire 200**6** – 200**7**

Enseignement Catholique 100F
"CELLULE MURAILLE D'AMOUR"
Donnons-leur un sourire pour la vie

ECOLE PRIMAIRE
CATHOLIQUE DE TABOU
B.P. 6 Tél.: 34.73.42.97

LIVRET DE NOTES

NOM DE L'ELEVE:
MARIE
MATRICULE: **4285** Classe **CM2**

Source: Fieldwork, spring 2007.

When UNHCR switched again to a logic of local integration in 2006 and started to phase out assistance, ending refugee schools was much easier then than in 2001. Firstly, there were fewer refugees to integrate (less than 40,000 in 2006 compared to 123,000 in 2001). Secondly, secondary education had not received any UNHCR support from 2003 to 2006, so the burning issue of high school certification did not arise

this time. Thirdly, at the primary level, the IRC had several contacts with Liberian education officials in Maryland County which eventually led to a certain form of grade equivalence between the two systems. Children returning to Liberia could in theory enrol in the same grade, provided they produced the IRC student progress report card upon arrival (Ministry of Education Liberia, 2006).

For refugees who wanted to stay in Côte d'Ivoire, there was no formal agreement on grade equivalence between the IRC and the Ivorian system. There was also no transition period to facilitate integration. In some cases, it happened smoothly, as in Mary's case, but often refugee children could not enrol in Ivorian schools even if they wanted to. The main reason was the structural lack of space in the Ivorian public schools. Liberian parents usually came too late for registration due to lack of information, and the classes were already full. The lack of administrative documents was also mentioned as an entry barrier, yet it might not have been the biggest hindrance. Lack of papers is common in sub-Saharan Africa and many Ivorian children do not have birth certificates when they start school. It is usually tolerated until they reach the first examination class; then their administrative file has to be in order or they cannot sit the Grade 6 examination and continue schooling (Pedagogical counsellor in Tabou, personal communication, April 2007).

15.6 Conclusion

The INEE recommends the implementation of the home country curriculum in 'short-term' refugee situations. If refugees become 'long-term', it advocates for a refugee education that 'faces both ways': educational attainments are recognized in both host and home countries and students' options are kept open, whether they choose to continue schooling or to enter local labour markets (INEE, 2004). Is therefore the main challenge to distinguish short-term from long-term refugee situations? We should have enough understanding of the complexity of new wars to avoid the mistake of assuming that any crisis will be over soon. UNHCR policy in Côte d'Ivoire was largely based on the expectation that the Liberian civil war would not last. Yet it went on for more than a decade, enough for two generations of children to complete primary school and for many students to reach secondary and post-secondary level.

Lengthy debate on which curriculum to use in response to massive displacements of population may not be the most relevant focus in

our case. Firstly, education has a relatively low effect on the decision to repatriate, contrary to the widespread idea that using the curriculum of the host country may prevent refugees from returning home (Bird, 2003; Buckland, 2006; Sinclair, 2002); secondly, there is the structural inadequacy of both Liberian and Ivorian education systems relative to local labour markets. It would be wrong to assume that Liberian refugees' ability to find work in Côte d'Ivoire or in Liberia depends on whether they followed English- or French-speaking classes. The transition from school to work is usually quite painful and youth unemployment is a major concern in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, with no exception for educated youth. In African countries where data is available, only 5 to 10 per cent of new entrants into the labour market can be absorbed by the formal economy (International Labour Organisation, 2003). What is actually at stake for most youngsters is the portability of employable skills rather than the portability of credentials. Yet the logic of credentials often prevails in the discussions and focuses attention away from more pragmatic issues.

What is striking in this case is the lack of reference in 2003-2007 to the 1992-2001 period. One would indeed expect that a decade of experience would have helped practitioners to be better prepared to respond to a refugee influx, but this was not so. In 2003, practitioners genuinely believed that setting up a parallel system was the wisest solution. In the early 1990s, there was a general agreement by all stakeholders to set up a parallel system of education for Liberian refugees, and the UNHCR initial response reflected that consensus. It indeed created an unsustainable education system unsuited to local integration from the very start, but there was no other realistic alternative. Absorbing 75,000 Liberian children into the existing Ivorian schools was not possible at that time, given the lack of infrastructure in the ZAR. What could have been better planned was the switch from non-formal to formal education in 1999-2001. Instead of a proper transition, this study shows UNHCR shifting the burden of the Liberian children to the Ivorian state, arbitrarily excluding secondary school students from assistance and only partially fulfilling its commitment to strengthening existing infrastructures. Issues of equivalence and certification were only partially tackled and too little pedagogical attention was given to children who already had a few years of schooling in the parallel system. Ad hoc responses were the norm and there was no consensus among the actors involved in refugee education.

Keeping refugees' options open should be central in the formulation of assistance. Yet internationally-driven support often takes a single form, based on what is wrongly assumed to be the standard pattern. True, given the scale of most refugee influx and the necessity to act fast, it is unlikely that every single individual can be properly attended to, but practitioners can still seek to preserve refugees' liberty to choose which education system fit them best. This implies acknowledging the multiplicity of refugees' educational trajectories and taking a more nuanced approach in response, away from a single standard package to a support 'à la carte', that takes into account local initiatives and refugees' individual agencies at the design stage of assistance, and that does not limit support to internationally-driven supply.

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