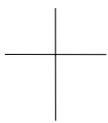


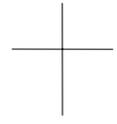
the **flight** ,  
**exile**  
and **return**  
of chadian refugees

a case study  
with a special  
focus  
on  
women

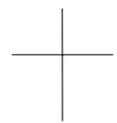
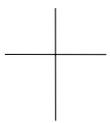
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Chadian National Institute of Social Sciences

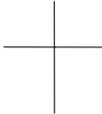
Prepared by CAROL WATSON for the  
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development





the flight , exile and return of chadian  
refugees





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## Preface

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The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has sponsored a number of case studies in recent years to investigate the social situation of refugees in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These studies have sought, through original field research, to analyse the challenges encountered by different categories of refugees and to evaluate the policies and programmes launched to address their problems. The most recent phase of the research programme focused on returning refugees in African countries — a relatively neglected area in research and policy analysis. But subsequent years have vindicated the practical and policy relevance of this research. UNRISD publications on this subject have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the processes, policies and programmes conducive to the welfare of refugees returning to their countries of origin.\*

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\* **Refugees Returning Home**, Report of the Symposium for the Horn of Africa on the Social and Economic Aspects of Mass Voluntary Return Movements of Refugees (Addis Ababa, 15-17 September 1992), UNRISD, Geneva, March 1993; **When Refugees Go Home: African Experiences**, Tim Allen and Hubert Morsink (eds.), UNRISD, James Currey Ltd. and Africa World Press, London and Trenton, New Jersey, 1994; **In Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight and Homecoming in Northeast Africa**, Tim Allen (ed.), UNRISD, James Currey Ltd. and Africa World Press, London and Trenton, New Jersey, 1996.

The issues addressed in the research project included the nature of the obstacles encountered in processes of resettlement and how they have been overcome; the advantages and disadvantages of different programmes of assistance in facilitating such processes; the survival strategies adopted by returned refugee populations; and the degree to which they have been able to positively apply lessons drawn from experiences acquired in exile. The different categories of actors studied included both repatriated refugees and local populations residing in the regions of return. An attempt was made to analyse experiences before, during and after the period of exile.

This monograph investigates the plight of returning refugees in Chad with a focus on women refugees. Like most UNRISD activities, this study has involved collaboration between several parties. Various bilateral and multilateral agencies provided financial and material support for research and for the seminar on the research findings held in N'Djaména. Research guidance and technical backstopping were provided by UNRISD and the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED) in Geneva. The field research was carried out by a team of scholars from the National Institute of Social Sciences in Chad. The project was co-ordinated at UNRISD by Hubert Morsink, and the monograph in its present form was prepared by Carol Watson, based on the findings of the field research and her own study of the Chadian situation.

One of the least developed countries, Chad has gone through the horror of an endless cycle of civil wars: between 1965 and 1992, there were 10 waves of refugees fleeing the country and at least 8 waves of returnees. These events have resulted in dramatic loss of life, collapse of social networks, threats to people's livelihood and destruction of a great deal of the physical infrastructure of the country. This monograph, based upon original data collected through questionnaires and interviews, sheds invaluable light on the experiences of women refugees in exile and after their return to Chad. The personal testimonies of farmers, pastoralists, mothers, widows and wives tell vivid stories of struggle, suffering, trauma and despair — and also of courage and hope.

The monograph argues that, when it comes to real day-to-day problems, it does not make sense to make distinctions between refugees and internally displaced persons or between refugees fleeing from civil war, drought or environmental disaster. Women and children constitute more than 80 per cent of the world's refugees; yet projects for resettlement, employment and income generation continue for the most part to be male-oriented. The monograph brings out the wide diversity in social and economic conditions in different parts of the country. Uniform programmes and projects insensitive to these differences are thus doomed to failure.

One of the interesting points made in the pages that follow relates to changes in attitudes, values, relations and skills brought about by refugees' experiences in exile. For women refugees, this is manifested in an erosion of cultural taboos and social stigma, a new-found freedom in the face of male incapacity, new patterns of gender division of labour, opportunities for learning new occupations, a sense of greater independence, and recognition and forging of new social networks. On return to their regions, many women are forced to conform to traditional social and economic patterns, but the experience in exile often opens up liberating and challenging avenues. There is much in this monograph of interest to scholars of refugee studies and to the policy makers, aid agencies and NGOs involved in settlement and integration of returning refugees.

August 1996

Dharam Ghai  
Director, UNRISD



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