

XI. MISCELLANEOUS

EVALUATION OF VOLUNTARY AGENCY CAPABILITIES

At present there are approximately a dozen voluntary agencies with refugee or DP experience working in El Salvador to provide assistance to displaced persons. A list of these agencies can be found on the following page.

General Comments

Few of the voluntary agencies are considered experienced in either refugee or DP assistance. Five of the organizations CARTAS, ICRC, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Save the Children Federation (USA) and World Vision -- have provided high quality assistance to refugees in other parts of the world.

Most of the volags in Salvador, however, are not experienced and in many cases are participating in this type of program for the first time. Their inexperience and lack of understanding of many of the relief principles is evident in the fact that they often concentrate on assistance modes that will have little long term effect in changing the status of desplazados.

Most types of aid and assistance given by smaller agencies is on a person-to-person basis. Some of this aid entails providing sanctuary to persons who do not want to register with CONADES for relief assistance. Assistance levels are minor when compared to the overall need and the combined resources of all of the minor agencies cannot be expected to have a major impact. Furthermore, much of the assistance is sporadic and levels of service cannot be maintained. Several of the smaller agencies have reported that they have had to

cut back on their services and focus their assistance on certain target populations.

Only ICRC and CARITAS are currently offering widespread services to significant numbers of displaced persons. CARITAS is primarily involved in food programs (see section on food aid) and operates the largest displaced persons camp in San Vicente. CARITAS has also assisted local parishes by helping them to meet localized DP needs.

With the exception of CARITAS, and to a limited extent the Green Cross, no volag is currently responsible for managing a particular DP settlement. In most refugee and DP situations, voluntary agencies are assigned responsibility for managing or coordinating assistance to specified camps or populations, but this is not the case in El Salvador.

Agencies With Useful Expertise

The following agencies have experience that could be useful in upgrading DP settlements:

1. CARITAS - CARITAS and its affiliated organizations, such as CRS, have extensive experience in health and nutrition programs in other countries. In Honduras, CARITAS is providing services in the Mesa Grande refugee camp which most observers feel are first rate.
2. Mennonite Central Committee - MCC has an excellent record in helping persons in refugee camps establish home gardens that can supplement their nutritional status as well as provide some additional cash. MCC currently operates a terrace garden project in the Mesa Grande camp.

3. Save The Children Federation - SCF has helped to demonstrate and install lorena stoves in several refugee settlements in El Salvador. They are also experienced in children's programs and in developing programs to provide income for women with dependent children. In some countries SCF has prior experience in operating nutrition and supplementary feeding programs for vulnerable groups.
4. Medecins Sans Frontiers - MSF has extensive experience in health and nutrition programs in refugee camps. Recently MSF operated a nutrition rehabilitation program in Mesa Grande that worked well enough that it could be discontinued in Jan. 1984.
5. World Vision - WVI also has extensive experience in refugee camp situations. In Thailand, World Vision operated several supplementary feeding programs and established extensive gardening and agricultural programs in refugee camps.

Several local organizations have also been gaining experience through trial and error that could be expanded and applied to the overall situation.

U.S. Government Assistance to the Voluntary Agencies

The primary obstacles to increasing U.S. Government assistance to the volags now working in El Salvador are:

1. Reluctance of the agencies to work for or with the Government of El Salvador or the U.S. Government. Several of the agencies feel that in order to maintain their neutral status, it is important that they not receive resources, nor appear to take direction, from the U.S. Government or the GOES. In order to support these organizations, it may be necessary to provide a

mechanism whereby funds can be channeled to the organization in such a way that their independence will not be questioned.

2. The capacity of most El Salvador based volags to expand their services is limited. Few of the volags have trained professional staff with previous refugee or DP experience. To try to expand these agencies by providing more resources may overextend them.
3. The expertise needed to analyze needs and react accordingly is currently not available within the El Salvador volag community. The smaller volags do not have the in-house expertise and the larger volags have not brought in appropriate specialists. Before the service level can be improved, extensive training must be provided. (See section on coordination).

MAJOR VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS
WORKING IN EL SALVADOR

ASESAH (Archdiocese of San Salvador)

Catholic Relief Services (in support of CARITAS and Catholic Churches)

CARITAS

CEBESAD (Protestant Ecumenical Movement)

Cruz Roja Salvadorena (Salvadoran Red Cross)

Cruz Verde (Green Cross)

Foster Parents Plan

International Committee of the Red Cross

Luthern World Relief

Medecins Sans Frontiers

Mennonite Central Committee

Save The Children (U.S.)

World Vision

Zaragoza

ORGANTZATIONS CONSIDERING INITIATIVES IN
EL SALVADOR AS OF FEBRUARY 1984

CARE

International Rescue Committee

Project Hope

PROTECTION

Protection remains the central issue confronting efforts to assist displaced persons. The issue and the associated problems are surrounded with many uncertainties, fear and rumors, and it is extremely difficult to verify all reports of protection violations. However, there are enough verifiable incidents, as well as recognizable patterns, to indicate that the specific problems identified below are, in fact occurring.

Protection of displaced persons is made more difficult by attitudes prevailing in many quarters that DPs are guerrilla dependents, supporters or sympathizers. While in some cases this is undoubtedly true, the fact remains that the vast majority of persons have fled the countryside to avoid conflict and threats to their lives. Surely the fact that the majority of persons have chosen to reside in government-controlled areas rather than those controlled by insurgents would indicate that they deserve the support and protection of the Governments of El Salvador and the United States. Furthermore, since as many as 20% of the people of El Salvador may be displaced, how the GOES addresses the protection issue will be critical to its success in winning the support of the Salvadoran people.

Protection in general is an issue so large that it transcends the DP assistance program per se, and the substantial number of specific problems that have been identified may well warrant the formation of a task force to work on details and specific solutions to the following problems:

INTIMIDATION OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND INFORMAL VOLUNTARY GROUPS
WORKING WITH UNREGISTERED DISPLACED PERSONS

There are persistent reports that voluntary agencies and informal voluntary groups such as students, churches, medical societies, and groups of concerned individuals have been intimidated, threatened and, in some cases, attacked for providing assistance to desplazados who have not registered with CONADES.

The opportunity for any organization or group of individuals to provide humanitarian assistance to desplazados must be protected. Not only is this a humanitarian principle, it is also a practical to do so. At the present time, there are estimates that possibly as many as one million persons may be displaced. The government of El Salvador does not have the resources to provide assistance to all displaced persons; it must focus on security, reconstruction, normal development and routine operations. Humanitarian assistance is invariably a partnership between government and private organizations. Far from discouraging person-to-person assistance, the government should encourage further efforts in this respect, if only to reduce the amount of expenditure that would otherwise be diverted from its routine operations.

There is an unfortunate perception on the part of many people that organizations working with DPs unregistered with CONADES are somehow "guerrilla sympathizers." While there are certainly many organizations which find it difficult to support the GOES, the vast majority also find it difficult to condone the violence of the insurgents. Many of these organizations seek to provide humanitarian assistance as neutrals in the conflict. The right to act in a politically neutral manner in such a conflict must be recognized and protected.

Options for Resolution of the Problem

The options include:

1. The U.S. could encourage the GOES to proclaim a statement of principles regarding humanitarian assistance to desplazados with the intent of guaranteeing respect for neutrality of organizations adhering to specified principles of humanitarian assistance.
2. All concerned in this humanitarian effort should publicly declare support for this declaration of humanitarian principles.

FEAR OF TAKING LEADERSHIP ROLES IN DP CAMPS AND CONCENTRATIONS

In many of the camps and concentrations of desplazados, the organization of efforts to provide self-help has been discouraged by the fear that anyone taking an active leadership role would be risking repression. This fear has been expressed most often by organizations serving non-registered camps and from people in those camps. In one case that occurred during the evaluation team's visit, two leaders of a self help committee in a small encampment of non-registered desplazados assisted by an ad hoc organization were kidnapped by unidentified civilians soon after they were elected to leadership positions. Since that time, no one has been willing to participate in organized community activities in that settlement. Other desplazado communities have reported similar incidents, thus inhibiting DPs from participating in vitally needed leadership roles. As self-help is one of the primary principles of providing assistance to desplazados, action must be taken to ensure that protection is provided for those willing to take leadership positions.

REGISTRATION

Registration of desplazados remains a central issue for the government and voluntary agencies providing assistance. At the present time, the only registration system in use is the voluntary registration of desplazados with municipalities that is encouraged in order to make them eligible to both receive food from CONADES and employment from the Jobs Program.

Unofficial estimates are that perhaps two or three times the number of persons currently registered for CONADES food are displaced and a significant number of these persons are in need of some form of assistance. Church organizations, various non-government humanitarian organizations, and many informal groups are providing assistance to desplazados who are not registered with municipalities for food or work. Many of these organizations do not have extensive resources and could benefit from the food supplies provided by WFP. However, WFP looks only to CONADES to provide official estimates of desplazado numbers, and imports food based on that estimate. This limits the number of people who can be supplied because many persons fear that the registration lists of CONADES are not secure and may inadvertently be used for adverse actions against persons in the displaced population.

Registration is a legitimate concern not only of the government but also of the other humanitarian agencies. Gross population statistics are one important by-product of registration, and protection and tracing are important reasons for some form of registration to be adopted. However, it is important that the registration system be secure and that it be designed in such a way that it cannot be used to provide any party of the conflict with information which might be detrimental to the displaced persons.

Options for Registration

Several options exist for registration systems which should be explored. These are:

1. Assigning registration responsibility to an international neutral such as the ICRC. The primary advantage to such a system would be that the neutral organization would be the only organization maintaining lists and central control could be maintained to counter any fraudulent use of registration cards. Statistics could be provided to CONADES or other government organizations as necessary in order to enable the organizations to obtain the data needed for planning purposes.
2. Permitting recognized relief organizations to carry out their own registration. Under this system, an organization supporting displaced persons could approach WFP or other logistical agencies and request supplies for certain numbers of desplazados and receive them on the basis of the gross numbers. In this way, church organizations, the ICRC and other volags would maintain their own registration system and not be required to reveal it to the government. The organizations would be responsible for ensuring that corruption and duplication did not exist, though the geographic location of DPs and the assisting agencies are such that, in practice, it is doubtful that much duplication would occur, especially in rural areas. Gross numbers could still be provided to the government through a central neutral agency so that data could be obtained for planning purposes.
3. Multi-organizational registration: A secure registration system utilized by a minimum of four different assisting organizations could be developed and made secure through random numbering and control of the master numbers list by a neutral international

organization. In this method, a standard registration card bearing the logos of the participating relief organizations would be issued to each desplazado by one of the participating organizations. Upon receiving the card, the desplazado would go to a representative of the registering organization and receive a number which would be recorded for verification purposes only by the neutral organization. The card could be presented at any time to any one of the participating organizations or designated "extension" agencies to obtain relief services or supplies. The recording organization could make periodic inspections of different projects and distribution programs to ensure that duplication or corruption does not occur.

Recommendations

1. The assessment team recommends that a study group be established consisting of CONADES, CRS, ICRC, CARITAS and the Green Cross (Cruz Verde) to explore the need and procedures for establishing a uniform registration system.

2. WFP is the preferred organization to convene meetings of the study group.

DP SANCTUARIES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN SALVADOR

At the present time, the archdiocese of San Salvador is providing shelter to approximately 3,000 people in sanctuaries in San Salvador. These sanctuaries are churches and church facilities that have been converted into makeshift dwellings for those DPs who are fearful of either being in disfavor with the Salvadoran Government or of being harmed by right-wing extremists.

The three camps -- San Roque, La Basilica, and San Francisco de la Montana -- are all enclosed and densely populated with little room inside for privacy. Numerous observers have reported that conditions are extremely over-crowded, that sanitation is poor, and that the people are in poor health and in need of many goods and services.

In addressing the problems of the camps, the evaluation team undertook two separate perspectives: an investigation of conditions and an investigation of the protection issues which might explain why persons have continued to live in the sanctuaries for, in many cases, more than two years.

1. **Camp Conditions:** Each of the three sanctuaries was visited by a member of the evaluation team. Particular emphasis was given to San Roque, reported to be the worst of the three locations and the one in which the occupants were living under the worst conditions. Reports of the conditions in San Roque, as well as in the other two camps, have been seen as so dramatic that special language in the enabling legislation for refugee program assistance to the DP program in El Salvador specifically mandated that means be found to provide material aid to these persons.

The evaluation team conducted extensive examinations in San Roque, took arm circumference measurements of children to determine the nutritional status of those under five; inspected all of the physical facilities used by the DPs, including water, sanitation, cooking facilities, washing and bathing areas, and living areas; conducted interviews with persons residing in the sanctuary to determine health histories of families and viewed the health care facilities and self-employment facilities in the sanctauary.

Despite problems of overloaded toilets, which were not functioning properly during the time of the visit, and a poorly-vented common cooking area, the inspection team noted that the persons residing in the San Roque were, from the standpoint of child health and nutrition, in better condition than any other desplazado population visited. On-site health care was available from nurses working in the sanctuary; all families were well-organized into established routines that provided not only adequate maintenance of the facility but also work and exercise for occupants of the sanctuary; the majority of families participated in some form of income-earning activity, such as hammock-making, sewing or handicrafts; and each family was provided storage space for their few belongings. The children had received toys and older children took care of the younger ones, engaging them in various games and activities while adults participated in other routines. While the facility is undoubtedly overcrowded, all DPs have either floor mats or hammocks which during the day are rolled up and placed on racks or shelves on the walls to make room for people moving around during the daytime; adequate facilities exist for group cooking; and a washing area for women to clean clothes and wash utensils, which is the central focus of life in the sanctuary.

The team concludes that, despite the overcrowding and the physical problems identified above, special efforts to provide material, food or medical assistance are not necessary. The primary need in San Roque and the other sanctuaries is relief from overcrowding and protection.

2. Protection: In discussions with numerous persons familiar with the plight of the desplazados in the archdiocesan sanctuaries, it became clear that the prime need of the persons in the sanctuaries is for protection. For the most part, there are three types of persons in the sanctuaries: (1) persons who have taken sanctuary because of real threats to their lives and safety; (2) persons who have taken sanctuary because of fear of violence and who recognize that the church has always provided sanctuary in time of need (the threat to these persons is perceived but may not be actual) and (3) persons who have fled to the sanctuary because they do not have proper documents, because friends or relatives may have been killed or threatened by right-wing extremists, or people who fear that family ties, extended though they may be, put them at risk.

In the case of the first group, little or nothing can be done directly by the U.S. Government. In some cases, a third party such as ICRC or the UNHCR might be able to arrange for these persons to be resettled to another country, although in many cases the persons may refuse to leave for fear of losing contact with relatives and friends on the outside.

For the remaining two groups, however, there is a possibility that a permanent solution to their problem can be found through the provision of assistance either to relocate or to obtain documentation so that they can leave the sanctuaries and return to their places of origin, or another place more secure. Officials of the archdiocese have indicated that this is their

primary choice and that they are exploring options at the present time.

There are several ways in which the U.S. Government might support these actions although it may choose to do so indirectly, rather than through direct intervention:

- A. A Human Rights officer from the Department of State might be assigned coordinating responsibility to work with the Archdiocese in developing relocation options.
- B. The U.S. Government might arrange for a third party neutral such as a person selected by the Contadora Group or an international organization, to work with the Archdiocese to explore resettlement options and to develop relocation plans for those persons wishing to move to a safe site or return to their place of origin.
- C. The U.S. Government might arrange through a third party neutral to provide a team of persons to try to establish whether or not persons within the sanctuaries are still at risk from government action or right-wing extremists and, if not, to provide necessary documentation and relocation assistance to enable them to leave the sanctuaries. It should be noted, however, that the Archdiocese reports that when they retained a legal aide to assist in helping some of the families to replace their lost documents, he disappeared. Thus, any activities in this field must be carefully considered and adequate protection for the persons providing research and documentation must be provided.

- D. The ICRC normally provides protection services. ICRC could be asked carry out the research needed to provide replacement documents for persons inside the sanctuaries.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the U.S. Government policy in regard to the sanctuaries be to assist church efforts to reduce the population in the sanctuaries through provision of replacement documents followed by relocation and resettlement, rather than to try to provide medical or material assistance to the desplazados residing there.

PHASING DPs OUT OF THE RELIEF PROGRAM

Once registered and receiving supplies, most displaced persons have continued to receive relief and few desplazados have been removed from the registration lists. Of the CONADES registered DPs over 150,000, or more than one half, have been on the rolls for two years or more. At the same time, some desplazados have reached a point where they have regained enough self-sufficiency that continued support is not required. For many people, the relocation caused by the conflict has become permanent and many of these people will never return to their original homes. At the same time there are new needs that must be met and the government and the relief agencies cannot continue to support desplazados indefinitely. Thus, a program needs to be developed whereby a significant portion of the displaced population can be phased out of the relief system. The plans however, must be carefully considered. The DPs are now in a "safety net" and are receiving services and supplies which enable many to survive in an extremely severe economic environment. It would be a poor policy to take people who are already in a marginal condition and drop them out of the safety net into an increasingly deteriorating economic situation. Thus, a blanket approach, such as ending aid after a specified period of time or relocating large numbers of people to another area without providing extensive employment opportunities, would only add further strains to the existing socio-economic environment.

Recommendations

CONADES should be encouraged to establish a planning group to develop programs whereby certain groups of persons can be phased out of the relief program and provided with sufficient support to enable them to make the transition without endangering their health,

nutritional or economic status. The committee should recommend a balanced program of aid and services designed specifically to provide displaced persons with the support required.

The focus of transitional programs must be on individual families rather than on broad brush approaches or formulas related to time.

There are three ways in which displaced persons may be phased out: relocation; return to their place of origin, or; transition out of the assistance program into the local economy in, or near, where they are now residing. Each of these activities will require individual case work in order to determine eligibility for assistance, the people's desire to participate, and to determine the most appropriate type of assistance that should be given.

Plans are currently being developed to assist DPs in relocation (see section on relocation) and CONARA has developed a program to support persons returning to areas that have been recaptured and pacified by government forces. An additional program to identify, counsel and assist persons in transitioning from the relief program to a normal life in the communities where they reside is needed.

In order to provide services to help families make this transition it is recommended that an Office of Transitional Services (OTS) be established within CONADES. The role of this office would be to do individual case work in helping people decide how, and prepare to, reestablish a normal life. The OTS would operate two of the transitional programs; the relocation program and the program to transfer DPs into development programs where they are now residing. Persons wishing to return to their place of origin in a pacified area would be referred to CONARA.

It is recommended that the program to help families settle into their new communities should focus on: 1) persons disbursed throughout the population, 2) families who have established themselves in colonias, 3) and families living in ad hoc marginal settlements that could be upgraded and made permanent.

The emphasis of the program should be on desplazados who have been in the relief program for more than two years.

Groups of desplazados who should receive priority for relocation are discussed in the following relocation section.