'El pueblo tiene su valle'
by Isabel Parra

What irony of life
what terrible task
dispersed throughout the world
loving our homeland so much.

Sing, sing compañero
do not be afraid of anyone.
In this great multitude
the people have their valley.

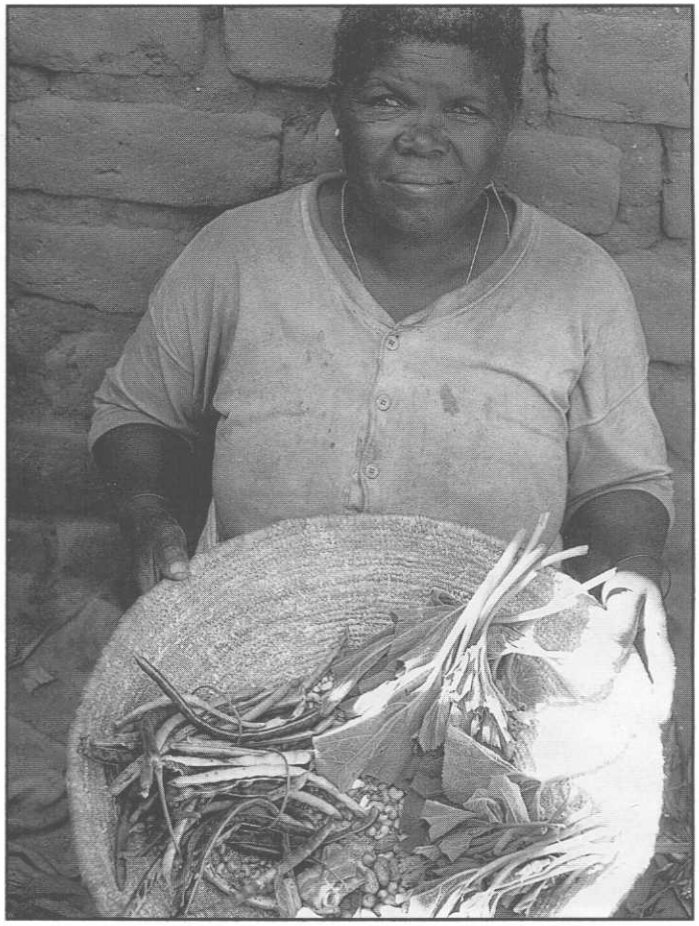
most important expression of being Chilean, and points of contrast with the American lifestyle were emphasized. These had to be expressed in creative new ways. Other aspects of life which at home had been relatively unimportant became more visible in the new setting and also became symbols of being Chilean. Dress, hairstyle and ways of speaking Spanish for instance, became significant in order to distinguish themselves from the rest of the hispanic community and in particular Mexican immigrants. As Chilean identity has evolved through interactions with the host community, the form it takes in the US will be different in some respects than in other host countries. Members of the Chilean community in Sweden and in California visited each other and each were somewhat dismayed to note the changes in the others. Each group felt that the other had become more assimilated and retained less of their 'genuine Chileanness'.

Whilst change is inevitable, it can be problematic for some exiles. Forced out of their home country but with a strong commitment to return, life is 'on hold' in exile. Return home is portrayed by this community as a 'return to life', and assimilation, as a betrayal of a political struggle would be social death. There may be considerable social pressure in these communities, decisions and changes are closely evaluated by members and those who do live up to these ideals may find it best to withdraw. Sometimes uncomfortable changes are negotiated by the community as a whole and are justified in the way that they contribute to the political cause - so instead of being a sign of settling down, buying a house can be explained as an economic investment enabling return from exile one day.

There is a real tension between continuity and change, what life should be and what it is. Changing to the American environment may be betrayal, but holding on to the past may also be problematic as life in Chile is also changing in the meantime. It is a permanent struggle to create a life which resolves the contradiction between past and present. It is a difficult but important task for those who work with political exiles to understand these dilemmas and support refugees' own initiatives to solve them.

Marita Eastmond

FOOD
LIFTING THE LID OF THE FOOD BASKET



Fresh food bought by refugees to supplement their diet *Photo by Ken Wilson*

In the following article, RPN raises some of the issues in the debate surrounding food for refugees and highlights some of the initiatives being taken to solve nutritional problems in settlements. This picks up on many of the themes raised by the Director of the World Food Programme, Mr James Ingram in his paper, 'Sustaining Human Dignity?', some responses to which were published in RPN 5.

What food should refugees be getting?

Recommendations for the food ration to be distributed to refugees were recently set out in 1988 at an International Conference 'Nutrition in Times of Disaster' and read as follows:

> 'The 1985 FAO/WHO/UNU energy and protein requirements should be used as the guide for calculating ration levels especially if the population is totally dependent on distributed foods. If it is not possible to meet these requirements, then a minimum of 1,900 kcal per person per day should be the target for sedentary populations. Additional allowances must be added for non-sedentary

groups, groups at risk, and groups exposed to severe temperatures. The protein content should be at least 12% of the total calories provided. The rations must also provide for minimum requirements of vitamins A, B, and C, iron and folic acid.'

Does the 'food basket' meet the recommendations?
A typical 'food basket' (i.e. individual daily ration for a refugee) would be 400g of cereal (usually wheat flour, maize or rice), 20g of oil, 20-50g of pulses, and rarely 20-50g of dried skimmed milk (DSM), although the latter is generally only given to vulnerable groups. This may meet the minimum energy recommendations cited above, but is unlikely to meet protein needs (see below). The adequacy of the vitamin and mineral content will depend on the range of foods distributed and whether or not foods are fortified (at present fortification is extremely rare except in DSM). In practice the ration which arrives is often incomplete and supply can be intermittent. The unavailability of one component of the ration may mean that it simply does not arrive, although a substitute may be provided. For example, the unavailability of groundnuts for Mozambicans in Malawi, led to their replacement with beans. This was directly related to an outbreak of *pellagra* in the camps as the sources of niacin in the maize-based diet were inadequate (Moren, A. Le Moult, D. 1990).

IS THE 'FOOD BASKET' NUTRITIONALLY ADEQUATE?

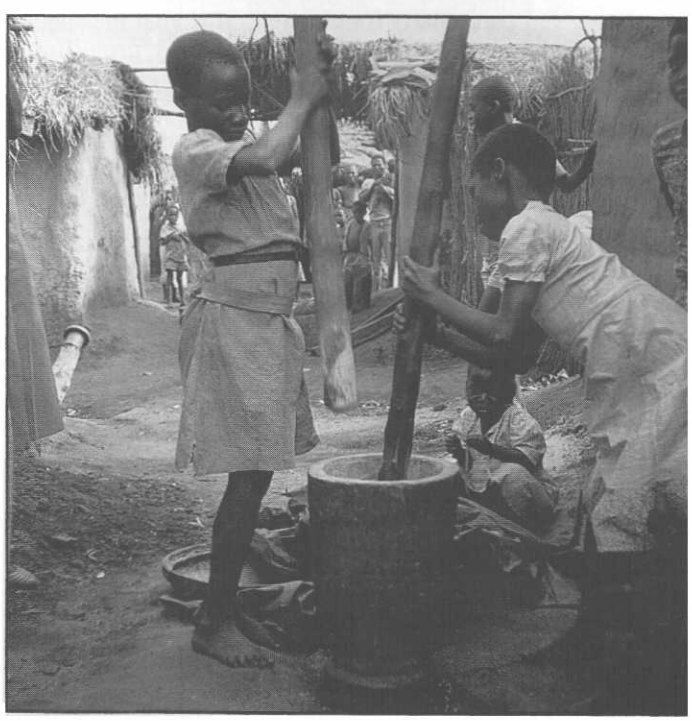
1. ENERGY

Do all refugees have the same energy needs?
The recommended minimum of 1900 kcal per capita is based on an 'average' population structure. Its adequacy will thus depend on the demographic structure of particular refugee populations. Problems arise where settlements have a high proportion of adult men, as for example in the camps for Southern Sudanese in Ethiopia, where the men have been forced into exile, but the women and children have more frequently fled north within Sudan. According to the US figures for recommended energy intake, 1900 kcal is only adequate for infants, young children and elderly women. For teenagers and adults, requirements are higher. Pregnant and lactating women may also need additional calories.

Can refugees make do with less because they are inactive?
Energy recommendations (both the US figures and the WHO minimum requirement) are based on the assumption of inactivity. Light, moderate or heavy activity all increase requirements. As refugees are at the very least often required to grind their cereal by hand, fetch and chop firewood, collect water, build their own shelter and look after their children - this criterion of a sedentary lifestyle is not always being met.

Are there other reasons why refugees could make do on less?
It is sometimes argued that refugees can make do with a low per capita calorific intake. This claim may be based on the fact that energy requirements depend in part on bodyweight and, though data are usually unavailable, refugees are said to be generally smaller and thinner than well-fed westerners. Even if these assumptions are sometimes true, calculations of refugees' energy needs should also consider the following reasons for higher needs. Infection may increase calorific requirements, for example, refugees often suffer from intestinal parasites and these have the effect of reducing the food absorbed and hence raising intakes required. Secondly, 'catch up' growth for children who are wasted or stunted may increase needs beyond the normal recommendation. Also, for adults who have experienced a period of food shortage, rapid weight gain may necessitate additional calorific intake. Thirdly, in situations where refugees lack adequate clothing or shelter, especially where it is cold and/or wet, physiological requirements are raised by the need to keep warm.

Does processing the food affect its nutritional value?
The necessity for refugees to process the cereals they receive further reduces what is left for consumption and hence the food value of the ration. Food may have to be used as payment for grinding, and preparation of whole cereals for cooking leads to unavoidable losses in processing. It has been estimated that pounding of whole maize causes losses which vary between 2% and 15% in addition to the bran fraction (as cited in Wilson 1989). In addition, the energy expended in processing maize flour has been calculated to amount to 2.6% of its food value (Wilson 1989). In Malawi, the shift to distribution of whole maize resulted in up to 40% of the 1742 kcal ration received being sold to pay for grinding (where facilities were available).



It has been estimated that the pounding of whole maize causes losses of between 2% and 15% *Photo by Ken Wilson*