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**PREMIERE
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EDITORIAL

« The problems don't stop at the camp entrance »

Kutupalong, M'Poko, Minawao, Kizimba, Zaatari. Behind these names, not mentioned enough in the media, lie the places that are home to hundreds of thousands of refugees or internally displaced people. All of these people have fled their homes in search of a safer place. Yet, the problems don't stop at the camp entrance, a new phase in their displacement merely begins: that of a life in a camp for refugees or internally displaced people. A displacement which can, in reality, last a long time. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, **the average now stands at 17 years.** In other words, for a situation that is meant to be temporary, this is now an eternity.

These conditions naturally have an impact on the daily lives of the individuals concerned. They affect both peoples' lifestyles and livelihoods, as well as their mental health, as illustrated in the report featured in this issue. The lack of a stable job, integrating into the community, or access to education for the youngest, are sources of stress and tension for people who are already scarred by past trauma. For these people, it's about rebuilding, literally, as well as figuratively.

Rebuilding, but without adversely affecting their new surroundings, the environment, for example. **In Bangladesh, almost 700,000 people** from Myanmar arrived in a region without reception facilities. That's the equivalent to a city the size of Lyon springing up in less than two months. The presence of camps undoubtedly poses a major environmental risk: groundwater pollution, the build up of waste, deforestation of local forests, etc. are all threats to the natural environment.

To deal with all these pressures, a specific role has emerged within the humanitarian community over recent years, that of camp manager. This somewhat vague term encompasses very different sets of circumstances depending on the context, but the role is specifically designed to address the issues mentioned above. Before a sustainable solution is found for displaced populations, their daily lives are supervised by the work of the camp manager, a role that Première Urgence Internationale has been involved in for many years in various countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, the Central African Republic or Bangladesh, for example. It's this little known but absolutely vital role, which focuses on both the individuals concerned as well as the location that accommodates them, which this issue offers you a glimpse of.

Maxime Banchereau

Head of Emergencies at Première Urgence Internationale



REPORTAGE

IN THE ALLEYWAYS OF EXILE

Reception facilities that are often precarious, camps for refugees and displaced people are increasing throughout the world. Transient towns and villages whose lifespans are getting longer, these sites must be managed in order to accommodate refugees in the best possible conditions. In order to meet this challenge, Première Urgence Internationale has been developing camp management operations.

Last March, elephants killed dozens of Rohingya, people from the Rakhine State ethnic group in Myanmar and refugees in the Kutupalong Camp in Bangladesh. The reason for the attacks: the infrastructures necessary for life had been set up on the migratory route of these animals. To avoid panic and further accidents, the management of this humanitarian camp have since installed towers in order to keep an eye out for the arrival of the elephants. They have also trained refugees in how to respond to these intrusions.

Première Urgence Internationale is one of six managers at the Kutupalong Camp, nicknamed the 'mega camp' because of the 700,000 refugees that it currently accommodates. Shelters constructed with tarpaulin and bamboo are situated right next to the little hills that the Rohingya go up and down, as many as five or six times a day. "The materials are fragile and the homes fall apart during mudslides in the rainy season", says Marion Ramstein, Project Manager - Camp Coordination and Camp Management in Bangladesh for Première Urgence Internationale. After each heavy rainfall, the camp is unrecognisable, destroyed by the storms.

Cameroon

Refugees sitting in front of their shelters in the Minawao Camp.



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The camp management then try to find short-term solutions to ensure that refugees are able to live in acceptable conditions. They work together with the stakeholders present in the field, which is sometimes a major challenge.

"Here in the field, we have to work with 57 stakeholders, for example, international organisations, the authorities or other partners who do not necessarily talk to each other", explains Marion.

The Camp Manager: the mayor of a small town

The existence of camp managers is therefore rapidly becoming essential in Kutupalong. Their role: to maintain the link between stakeholders, collect data, communicate, organise training and awareness raising activities, and above all, to ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible in a manner that is fair and equal.

"Each manager is in a sense a mayor of a small town. They handle all of the daily responsibilities within an area which is just like a town", explains Maxime Banchereau, Head of Emergencies at Première Urgence Internationale.

Within a camp, the managers rely as much as possible on community representatives.

"We try to understand how communities function before we arrive in the camp in order not to disrupt social patterns too much."

Building a life in a humanitarian camp

For refugees in a camp, the breakdown of their former lives is, in reality, often very difficult. The change in life and in environment is sudden and causes them to lose their bearings. Poor sanitation, instability, lack of space all add to inactivity, which leads to unease and creates tensions within the camps. *"There are no job opportunities. As a result, people can't be independent. And young people, they want to learn a trade but the camps suffer from a lack of training courses", notes Philippine Cartier, Camp Manager in Cameroon for Première Urgence Internationale.*

In the country, Première Urgence Internationale manages **eight Central African and Nigerian refugee camps**. The teams are trying to develop training courses in order to empower people. *"We work very closely with traditional leaders and sector heads. In so doing, we are trying to involve communities as much as possible in the organisation of the camp. But even if people tell us that they really appreciate what we are doing for them, they dream of only one thing: to return to their home country to get back to their field or their little shop."*

The **Borgop Camp**, which houses **12,000 refugees** from Central Africa, wakes up at dawn. The goats and the chickens roam among the shelters trying to steal vegetables or a few seeds. While the men get themselves ready to go to the fields, the women begin to cook. This will be the main activity of their day. The children, they look around outside. The majority of

Bangladesh

The Kutupalong Camp in Bangladesh is flooded during the monsoon season.

A small boy plays in the alleyways of the Kutupalong Camp in Bangladesh.



them aren't able to go to school. In fact, to be able to study in the country, they must be registered there.

"Registration is difficult and without an official identity card, refugees aren't able to access certain services, like health care systems. We deal with lots of problems related to what we call documentation."

In Borgop, brick shelters with straw rooves adjoin the neighbouring village. The distinction between the humanitarian camp and the homes of local people is barely visible. No barriers, no distinct border, as the site is completely open. People can come and go freely.

"The camp has been here since 2014. This layout is much easier for the people of the camp to live with as they feel less locked up although this has created problems with the villagers. In addition to conflict linked to economic and social pressures and to the lack of work, we deal with tensions related to arable land. It's not uncommon for a goat belonging to a refugee to trample all over the field of a local farmer." To defuse these disputes, Première Urgence Internationale has created joint exchange platforms, which bring together Cameroonians and refugees, so that everyone can express their discontent and solutions can be found together.

Some governments refuse to use concrete for camp foundations

In the far north of Cameroon, a few kilometres from the border with Nigeria, **Camp Minawao** accommodates around **52,000 people**, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Created in 2013, it is semi-open, like the camp in Kutupalong in Bangladesh, which makes physical access very easy once security checks are performed by law enforcement officials. The **623 hectares** of the camp look like a small town made up of shelters with a library, a community centre, meeting places for women, schools, health centres and job training centres at its heart. The refugees have constructed places that they use either as churches or mosques. In the camp, families are gradually settled in the various blocks after having passed through the transit centre.

"Once the shelters are built or installed, we allocate a family of four to each one, then we show them how to turn it into accommodation that's more durable", explains Frantzcy Bazalais, Camp Manager for Première Urgence Internationale in Cameroon. Première Urgence Internationale, manager of the camp, suggests to families that they make bricks, and then trains them so that they can build a more durable shelter with this material themselves. The aim is not that families remain there but for Frantzcy, it's a question of being pragmatic: *"We're not helping people to settle down for the long-term but to give them a temporary and decent place to live. Nobody wants to remain in a camp for the rest of their lives, however well-managed it is."*

The question of the sustainability of a camp is highly political. In fact, some governments refuse to use concrete for camp foundations, yet this would improve sanitation. But the use of concrete is seen as a symbol of a camp's long-term sustainability. Some countries categorically oppose the creation of humanitarian camps on their territory. So when camps are established without the permission of the authorities, humanitarian agencies are forced to intervene in what they call "unofficial camps", for example, buildings that are under construction or shelters that are not connected to water or electricity. The permits to implement this work are much more complicated to obtain, and vulnerable people are harder to reach as they are often dispersed over an area.

In Lebanon, for example, more than 40% of Syrian refugees live in unofficial camps. Première Urgence Internationale implements programmes for health, to support the reinstatement of shelters and access to water to help communities to gain the necessary autonomy to improve their living conditions.



We try to understand how communities function before we arrive in the camp in order not to disrupt social patterns too much. »

Iraq

The alleyways of the Bardarash Camp for displaced people in Iraq, March 2017.



A camp created along the runway

If the role of the camp manager is to deal with the urgency of the situation and protect people, an exit strategy or camp closure must be considered *"when the security situation permits it"*, Maxine states.

For example, teams accompanied the return of displaced people from the M'Poko Camp in Bangui, in the Central African Republic. Première Urgence Internationale managed the camp from 2014 to 2017 and when the security situation calmed down, they implemented a number of programmes, which included activities such as "go and see visits". These involved escorting displaced people back to their original neighbourhood and supervising interviews in order to prepare the displaced people for the impact that these visits can cause.

"The M'Poko Camp was created as an unofficial camp along the runway at Bangui Airport", recalls Maxime, *"and every time an aircraft prepared to land, the armed forces in charge of the airport had to evacuate the runway. Aircraft were landing right in the middle of the camp, after which the crowd slowly regrouped. Managing the camp, we held our collective breaths each time, afraid that an accident would happen."*

POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS: THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Première Urgence Internationale called on some experts to evaluate the environmental impact of humanitarian camps in the Adamawa region and eastern Cameroon, which have now taken in around 82,000 Central African refugees. The results are worrying.

In eastern Cameroon and in the Adamawa region, where seven refugee camps are based, the huge influx of Central African refugees since 2014 has led to a **depletion of natural resources**. Deforestation, a surge in waste and rubbish, problems with access to water, and damage have quickly become noticeable. The evaluation that Première Urgence Internationale carried out at ground level in 2016 has meant that the true impact of refugee camps in the region can be measured and concrete recommendations can be made.

It also means that humanitarian workers, stakeholders and decision makers are aware and can take the environmental dimension into account when it comes to population displacements.



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Building shelters and cooking meals can lead to **deforestation** in the surrounding areas. The study recommends replacing wood with clay bricks.

When the population of a village triples in size, it becomes essential to build more **water points**. A large number of boreholes can have a negative impact on the groundwater table.

An influx of a population, and its concentration in one area, can lead to a sharp rise in **household waste**. It is taken away to landfill sites and to cesspits, but these are insufficient to solve the problem. More long-term solutions, such as waste treatment facilities, are preferable, but require more funding.



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INFORMATION: A TOOL FOR SURVIVAL IN HUMANITARIAN CAMPS

An evaluation by Libraries Without Borders (LWB), in partnership with Première Urgence Internationale, was carried out in March 2018 to find out more about access to information and education for the Rohingya in the Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh. Anna Soravito, in charge of the study, explains to us the deprivations that the refugees are facing and looks at a major problem in the camps: boredom.

Should we consider a lack of access to information and to education as a high-priority problem in a refugee camp, where people have no basic infrastructures?

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the average amount of time spent by a refugee in a camp is 17 years. This is a really long time for these people who have been displaced from their homelands. Especially in camps, people rarely have the right or the opportunity to work, they are restricted in their movements and often have reduced access to services. Boredom is tangible in the alleyways of the camps and this word frequently crops up as a painful theme in discussions.

The need for entertainment and intellectual stimulation is rarely deemed a priority in these situations. In a camp, there is not always enough space to build a community centre or leisure centre where children can play and adults can make some entertainment. Yet this absence of 'fun' can lead to psychosocial disorders. It can also drive young people towards high-risk behaviour and harmful practices, such as trafficking, for example.

« It is really important to be able to express yourself in a context like this »

Can a lack of access to information and education become a vital issue in a refugee camp such as the one in Kutupalong?

If refugees have no access to information channels, it is very difficult to communicate with them and to prepare them for threats. For example, in the middle of the rainy season, the authorities and humanitarian workers in the camp need to explain to the refugees how to prepare themselves for possible landslides and for a cyclone's arrival. They need to learn what to do so that they are not trapped in the mud. Only 30% of the Rohingya population is literate and able to read. This makes it very difficult to pass on information. On top of this, people who arrived after August 2017 do not have refugee status in Bangladesh, and do not have the right to buy either a phone or a sim card. These obstacles can lead to critical emergency situations.

We have to find ways to reach these populations and to spread information to as many people as possible.

Are there any solutions for improving access to information and education?

Within a refugee camp, spreading information must partly come down to community mobilisation. For this to happen, we need to form discussion groups and get the community more involved in order to facilitate information being exchanged. During this study, we concentrated on the young Rohingya, over 14 years old, who did not have much time in school when they lived in Myanmar and who still have no access to learning facilities in the camps. Most are illiterate. They told us that they want to learn and to train. LWB is about to roll out media libraries in kit form in Bangladesh. This means refugees will be able to access information that will help them to survive but also various cultural resources: music, poetry, films, plays... These media libraries, who will be administrated by the camp management teams, will make it possible to create spaces for dialogue, expression and being sociable. Refugees will be able to use these tools to express themselves and to be creative.

It is really important to be able to express yourself in a context like this. We are also planning activities directly in people's living areas, so that we reach young adolescent people for example, who very rarely get the chance to leave their tents.

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