

4. By the end of 2011, some 2,596,000 refugees were living in camps in rural areas, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa (60%) and Asia (35%). In many countries around the world, refugees are supposed to reside in camps where humanitarian assistance is provided. This limits not only the freedom of movement of refugees but their opportunities for self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Refugees should not be seen as beneficiaries or recipients of humanitarian assistance, but as agents of change and factors of development. It is important to note that refugee camps were abolished in the Americas by mid-90.

III. CONFLICT PREVENTION, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND RECONCILIATION AMONG DISPLACED POPULATIONS.

Going back to the issue of cycles in human history, we need to consider how to put an end to the “forced displacement cycle”. However, the question remains how to overcome the psychological trauma of losing one’s home and going into exile, which often means losing contact with loved ones and supporting communities. How to empower refugees to start over in a new society? New generations might be born in exile and listen to the parents’ recollection of a society and a country unknown to them and parents might tend to highlight only the positive aspects that they remember and miss of their countries of origin (i.e. Ulysses syndrome).

When going back home is feasible, how to restore the social tissue to overcome possible resentments among refugees and those who actually generated the forced displacement? How to foster healing and reconciliation efforts among those who left and those who remain in the country? What coping mechanisms are needed to deal with psychological trauma as part of healing and confidence building efforts?

Yet, peace efforts, the restoration of the rule of law and the improvement of human rights conditions might enable the possibility of going back to countries of origin. In the case of Central America (i.e. Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala), peace building, democratization and reconciliation efforts were directly linked to the voluntarily repatriation of refugees and other displaced persons. In fact, the 1987 peace agreements explicitly refer to the situation of Central American refugees and their voluntary repatriation.