

THE NEXUS BETWEEN ASYLUM, ILLEGAL MIGRATION, THE EXPANDED USE OF RESETTLEMENT AND “RESETTLEMENT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF DURABLE SOLUTION”

Note: This paper is offered as a contribution to stimulate thinking on the above issues. It is deliberately broad ranging - reflecting the author’s belief in the ultimate ‘inter-connectedness’ of the subjects it addresses.

The paper represents the thoughts and opinions of the author and does not purport to reflect the views of the New Zealand Government, other NGOs or inter-governmental agencies. The author has been the Director of the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS - New Zealand) for the past 11 years. He has an intense interest in “future thinking” and a self-confessed addiction to the use of multiple metaphors!

BACKGROUND

In 1991, UNHCR affirmed its commitment to the principle of “Resettlement as an Instrument of Protection”¹ – first presented at EXCOM that year in a speech delivered by, then High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata.

UNHCR had, for some time, been expressing growing concern over the dominance of large-scale family reunion in the annual refugee quota programmes of a number of major resettlement countries. The era of the mass Indo-Chinese resettlement, the CPA and large movements directly out of the former Soviet Union, gave rise to a pattern of resettlement that appeared to be placing in jeopardy the ability of UNHCR to respond to new and emerging protection priorities.

The philosophy of preserving limited resettlement quota places for those *in greatest need of international protection*, appeared to find universal approval among resettlement countries. Indeed, while there may have been complications in ensuring that the principle has always been upheld in practise, the philosophy remains undeniably supportable.

Operationally, the refocusing of UNHCR resettlement targets has not always proved easily compatible with its parallel efforts to find durable solutions for some of its longstanding caseloads – for whom permanent solutions have been problematic. Some of these caseloads have remained under longstanding (but largely hollow) threats of possible refoulement.² This has sometimes made it understandably difficult for receiving countries to view them as cases in most urgent

¹ “Resettlement as an Instrument of Protection” - EXCOM Committee DocEC/SCP/65, July 1991

² Rhafa Camp - Saudi Arabia; Al-Tash Camp - N. Iraq

need or “protection”. However, it is validly argued that the term “protection” can legitimately be applied to cover a variety of refugee situations, not simply *protection from legal or physical harm*. Advocates of the broader interpretation suggest that removal from prolonged uncertainty and loss of personal freedoms constitutes a necessary form of protection.

Certainly, in the absence of any real prospects of successful repatriation or local integration, it has become increasingly apparent that the expeditious use of resettlement as “*an instrument of durable solution*” may provide the only option capable of finally bringing a sense of future certainty and hope to the lives of many longstanding refugees.³

UNHCR, countries of first asylum and various NGOs have all represented their individual views on such caseloads. Motivated by a combination of humanitarian concerns and political imperatives, each party has recognised the need to find “durable solutions” for these, and other subsequent, cases that may not accurately be defined as “urgent physical protection priorities”.

In earlier days, similar refugees were sometimes referred to as “Longstayers”. A number of countries (including New Zealand) made special provision, within their annual quotas, to accommodate such cases.

These caseloads have traditionally posed a variety of challenges, both for UNHCR and resettlement countries. Problems have included access difficulties, classification problems and the positions of various “sovereign governments” in countries of origin or first asylum. Some caseloads have contained high levels of pre or semi-literate people who realistically had very limited prospects of successful integration within the first generation.

Despite such challenges, many resettlement partners responded generously to requests from UNHCR to make provision for such groups within their annual quotas.

At the Annual Tripartite Consultations (Geneva, June 20/21, 2001) UNHCR foreshadowed its intention to place a greater emphasis upon the use of resettlement in the “durable solution” context.

The implications of this proposed refocusing of resettlement should not be underestimated. There can be no doubt about the desirability of finding durable solutions for the groups identified by UNHCR Frame

³ See Framework Papers prepared by UNHCR Nairobi and Addis Abbaba - ATC 2001, Geneva

Papers. However, the size of the potential *durable solution* is staggering and it is an unfortunate reality that many of the factors suggested as possible criteria for group identification⁴ are the very things that often complicate and put strains upon already over-stretched “post-arrival” resettlement services.

- *Time in camps (8 yrs minimum)*
- *Widowed or abandoned women and children*
- *Children and Adolescents whose education has been interrupted for many years*
- *Medical or Mental Health Cases who are repeatedly chronically ill as a result of injuries, sickness or trauma.*

THE ISSUE OF “SETTLEMENT & INTEGRATION POTENTIAL”

While a few resettlement countries have traditionally chosen to ignore “integration/settlement potential” in their selection considerations.... others have not. An unfortunate and inevitable consequence of this variance has been that those perceived as having the best settlement prospects (usually determined by language and employment skills) have often been selected and resettled first. Consequently, refugees who may have remained in camps for up to 20 years are often those whose integration potential has progressively been deemed least. Such cases inevitably pose greater resettlement challenges – both for the refugee and the receiving country. In this respect, resettlement countries that *have not* considered integration potential within their selection criteria have often been disadvantaged in the subsequent integration process as a result of their own laudable commitment to upholding the principle of humanitarian equity.

Some continue to urge that integration potential be ignored in resettlement activities. After all, it can be legitimately argued that the societal benefits of resettlement are often not evidenced until the second generation. Unfortunately, however, resettlement takes place *at a neighbourhood level* among voters who have neither the time nor the inclination to analyse such inter-generational benefits – but who are keenly aware of food prices, low social benefits and high unemployment.

Delegates at the recent ICRR Conference in Sweden adopted and affirmed the fundamental premise “**Resettlement Works**”. For

⁴ See UNHCR draft Framework for Durable solutions Resettlement Programs to the situation of Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia. ATC Geneva, June 2001

hundreds of thousands of former refugees who are now successfully established as contributing members of their adoptive new homelands, this is self-evidently true. This is also apparent for practitioners, with the advantage of longitudinal hindsight and institutional experience. But, of necessity, initial resettlement usually occurs in lower socio-economic areas where neighbours must compete for inadequate levels of state housing and limited employment opportunities.

Since refugees are effectively “homeless” on arrival, the Government of New Zealand has accepted a responsibility to grant them priority access to state housing – for which there is normally a long waiting list.

The notion of expanding the use of resettlement as a tool of Durable Solution implies the future acceptance of “groups” or “categories” of people from both long and short-term refugee situations. In accepting caseloads of non-English speaking (and often pre or semi-literate) people, there are certain unavoidable practicalities for settlement agencies and/or departments:

- For practical reasons of language, transportation and the ability to maintain pre-existing cultural support and friendships, people must be located geographically close to each other and within easy distance of important community facilities and services.
- State housing in these areas is also highly sought after by other New Zealanders – many of whom face long waiting lists for accommodation.
- Inevitably, the arrival and immediate housing of groups of culturally very different people - who are sometimes dissatisfied with the housing and used-furnishing provided – and are unable to communicate with their neighbours, can give rise to resentment, tension and antagonism.

Efforts are presently made to prepare receiving communities and educate them about their incoming refugee neighbours. However, it is far easier to convince those in higher socio-economic brackets about matters of “international burden sharing” than it is to convince people whose daily lives revolve around how they are going to pay next week’s rent and feed and clothe their family. To proclaim “Resettlement Works” in such circumstances risks placing the “proclaimer” on the endangered species list!

It is a fact that very few politicians or government policy advisors live in the same neighbourhood as resettling refugees - and they certainly do

not compete (in a language they do not understand and cannot speak) at the same end of the labour and salaries market.

When speaking about settlement/integration potential, there is often a tendency to view it purely as a mechanism to assess *the refugee's* capacity to adapt and contribute to the host society. Its opponents therefore portray it as an undesirable or unethical tool - used to discriminate against certain individuals or categories of refugees on the basis of education, language, or religious affiliation. This viewpoint is simplistic and misleading, since it ignores the equally important element of "*community potential*".

Consideration of *refugee aptitude* is only one side of a TWO-SIDED equation. Evaluating the settlement potential (capacity) that exists in the host community is just as important. Neither factor can be considered or evaluated in isolation. As was reiterated at the ICRIR conference, "*You cannot belong unless you are accepted*".

Frequently, it may be receiving communities that lack appropriate settlement potential – not the refugees. The relative "*settlement capacities*" of both refugees and receiving communities must be taken into account, since they are inextricably linked. Placing a new group in a community that lacks the resources and/or the willingness to facilitate successful integration does not often provide a "durable solution". It merely changes the geography, while presenting a differing set of problems, in a largely unsupportive and foreign environment.

In assessing the settlement capacity of a receiving community (particularly when considering the introduction of a *group/s* of people) a variety of factors must be taken into account:

- Is there an existing community of similar nationality or ethnicity that can help facilitate settlement?
- Are there adequate language facilities for those who speak no English?
- Are there appropriate places of worship in the neighbourhood (Mosques, Temples, Churches etc)?
- Is there access to Halaal food (for Muslim groups) in the neighbourhood?
- Are there adequate and appropriate interpreters available?
- Are there adequate trained volunteers or cross-cultural workers to assist in initial resettlement?

The mismatching of refugees and host communities can easily fuel pre-existing prejudices and lessen overall support for resettlement.

BURDEN SHARING AND PROPORTIONALITY

In trying to address a number of the more longstanding and complex caseloads, some parties have called for “burden sharing” principles to be adopted among resettlement partners – with countries encouraged to take “proportionally” from particular regions or camps. However, this begs the question: “Proportionate to what?”

- Proportionate to the numerical size or resettlement countries’ relative refugee/humanitarian quotas?
- Proportionate to the numerical size of their “UNHCR dedicated” quotas?
- Proportionate to the size of their refugee quota balanced against “refugee per capita population”?
- Proportionate to Gross National Product?
- Proportionate to relative unemployment statistics?
- Proportionate to relative economic growth and health?

Each one of these calculations may produce a significantly different result.

While the annual refugee quota in New Zealand is *numerically* small (750 per annum) it remains one of the world’s highest responding countries in terms of “per capita” refugee acceptance. This makes resettlement in New Zealand a far more “visible” process than it may be in some larger more homogeneous societies.

While the world continues its economic path toward the “Global Village” construct – it is being paralleled by a disturbing growth in right-wing nationalism, xenophobia and sectarianism. Such movements have always tended to flourish more in times of economic recession, high unemployment or when there are concerns about public health or safety. No continent has been immune from the need for some elements of society to search for “someone to blame.” Ethnic minorities or those who appear “not to belong,” have always been easy targets. Recent racial riots in England and continued racial tensions in the Balkans should serve as a chilling reminder of the need for genuine integration, rather than the establishment of ethnic enclaves within a dominant society.

At a recent gathering in Geneva, UNHCR High Commissioner, Ruud Lubbers suggested that a ratio of 1 refugee per 1,000 of host population (1:1,000) should perhaps represent a target to which resettlement countries might aspire⁵.

In the context of New Zealand this would raise the annual resettlement quota from 750 to approximately 3,750 – an increase of 500%. It would also require a proportionate increase in the funding of resettlement services and a very successful public-awareness campaign to counter the increased anti-refugee feeling that any announcement of such a policy would be sure to produce.

Presently, UNHCR faces significant budget cuts in an environment where it is already unable to provide adequate Protection and Determination Officers to cover the vast refugee populations of the world. As a result of these resourcing difficulties it has been increasingly difficult for UNHCR to make accurate and timely determinations of vulnerable individual cases within refugee populations of hundreds of thousands. While valuable assistance has been given to UNHCR through a number of NGO Secondments projects, the problems are still often overwhelming.

Proponents of the expansion of “resettlement as a tool of durable solution” argue persuasively that “protection” has many levels – ranging from *physical protection* to protection from *a prolonged separation from universally accepted human rights and opportunities*.

The ability to respond to categories or groups of refugees (*where there is no foreseeable possibility of repatriation or successful local integration*), without the traditional P1 requirement⁶ may potentially decrease the time and expense needed for processing, thereby allowing a faster response to a greater number people.

One downside to group submissions however, could be that resettlement countries might receive less information on individual refugee/family profiles – information that is often critical in making subsequent decisions on the acceptance and subsequent placement of refugees in countries and/or communities of resettlement.

THE NORTH/SOUTH DEBATE

In discussing the continuing relevance and importance of the Convention and Protocol, it has been argued that the increasingly

⁵ Annual Tripartite Consultations: June 21, 2001 – UNHCR High Commissioner, Ruud Lubbers

⁶ P1 entrants are individually referred by UNHCR or identified by US Embassies. The US Refugee Programme requires that all P1 cases are individually interviewed by INS officers.

restrictive policies of the northern (developed) nations, provide little encouragement for those in the south to 'buy into' a protection regime that appears to be under threat from within.

Many point out the fact that it is often countries with minimal resources, infrastructures and capacities that continue to play host to the vast majority of the world's refugees.⁷ They argue that this disparity can be attributed, not only to the global imbalance of wealth, but also to the increasingly harmonised refugee and migration policies and practices of the north and their unwillingness to unlock the gate valves of legal migration, asylum and increasing third-country resettlement.

It may be geographically convenient (and sometimes coincidentally justifiable) to portray these issues as north/south in origin, but they flow on well south of the equator. Consider, for example, Australia and New Zealand, where many asylum/migration policies increasingly reflect (or sometimes precede) those of their European and North American counterparts.

MIGRATORY MOTIVATORS

Described at its simplest level, migration has always been a product of the "haves" and the "have nots." - whether we speak of refugees or economic migrants.

- Refugees flee because they *have not* got effective protection from persecution or a guarantee of security in their home countries.
- Economic migrants move because they perceive themselves and their families to be socially or economically disadvantaged in their homeland.
- Family reunion migrants seek to move because they *have not* got the emotional and physical support of other important family members.
- Each seeks a country that they believe can better provide for their protection and/or economic or emotional needs.

Signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Refugee Convention and Protocol, (together with some non-signatories) have accepted special obligations and responsibilities in respect of refugees – recognising that they are not "voluntary migrants."

⁷ A large percentage of the world's refugees are hosted by countries with large populations and limited resources – typified in various African and S.W. Asian countries.

For many of the so-called ‘developed’ and wealthy countries, the issue of refugee determination and the granting of asylum are presently being seriously complicated by an increase in migrant trafficking – resulting in “mixed flows” of irregular arrivals, containing both illegal migrants and refugees. Understandably, both refugees and ‘would-be migrants’ are often attracted to the same countries. Asylum seekers because they perceive such countries to have the fairest and most developed refugee determination systems – illegal migrants, because they appear to offer the best chance of future economic prosperity.

THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER – OR IS IT?

Both forced and voluntary migration flows have existed throughout human history. However, numbers have continued to grow and movements have become more visible as the planet’s population increases, its resources decrease and countries improve their surveillance capabilities and border controls.

There has, of course, never been a universally acceptable definition of “*what constitutes enough.*” Consequently people who see themselves as “*having too little*” will always aspire to get more. There are very few people who ever perceive themselves as “*having too much*”.

By way of example: Many New Zealanders are leaving the country to seek work in the UK or Australia because they are dissatisfied with the education costs, employment prospects and salaries in their own country.

The old maxim that “*the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence*” remains alive and well. Unfortunately, many of the poorer nations have little or no grass left and the richer countries are building bigger and bigger fences!

Those who could once look over the fence (and occasionally successfully jump it) are increasingly reduced to merely peeping through the slats or paying for the services of people-smuggling “pole-vaulters.” This voracious new breed of profiteer preys on the desperation of a growing clientele. Migrant and refugee smugglers care little or nothing about the safety or protection of those whose life-savings (or borrowings) help to line the traffickers’ deepening pockets. As many developed countries continue to tighten their borders against illegal entrants, it is inevitable that genuine refugees will be forced to utilise the services of such people in their efforts to reach a country of asylum. Sovereign governments increasingly use “migrant trafficking” to justify the practise of interdiction (interception). However, in the absence of a comprehensive and fully funded structure that would

allow UNHCR to evaluate claims to refugee status at ALL “intercept” ports, the fundamental human right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution is seriously compromised. Assuming that it was possible to screen out and mandate all qualifying cases at points of interception, the resulting “refugees” must automatically then become cases for resettlement. This will evoke serious debate with regard to which country or countries may be willing (or has a responsibility) to accept them – especially where the country of interception is not a signatory to the Convention and Protocol and where applicants have transited through other supposedly “safe countries”.⁸

A further factor troubling governments is that they are often far less effective in their efforts to *remove* unsuccessful applicants than they are in determining the merits of their claim. This adds to the perceived advantages of preventing illegal migrants entering the country in the first place.

A number of governments continue to search for ways to “tighten” their refugee determination processes by introducing unacceptable ‘safe country’ or “transit country” exclusions. This is sadly ironic, since the backlogs and spiralling costs, that have plagued many determination systems, have resulted from the countries’ own laudable desire to afford refugee status claimants every opportunity to present their claim and appeal against unfair decisions.

IS THERE A WAY AHEAD?

It is undoubtedly in the best interests of governments, UNHCR and the civil society to try and stamp out migrant trafficking and regularise movement and migration as much as possible. This should not, however be at the expense of any person’s right to seek asylum from genuine persecution. Since there seems little likelihood that the countries already practising “interception” are going to stop, the complex challenge of providing access to a UNHCR managed (or monitored) determination process at ALL points of interception must be rapidly advanced. Ultimately, the savings to national governments may more than compensate for monies applied to the costs of establishing such mechanisms. If permanent positions cannot be established in all relevant countries, perhaps a form of regional UNHCR “Flying Squad” could be established to ensure that Protection Officers screen **all** intercepted persons who express a desire to seek refuge or display

⁸ This problem is typified by the growing caseload of designated refugees among the mainly Middle Eastern boat people in Indonesia.

behaviour symptomatic of genuine fear of return to their country of origin.

As alluded to in the previous section, persons intercepted (in countries that are not signatories to the Convention/Protocol) who are subsequently determined to have a genuine claim to refugee status, automatically become “resettlement” cases. This carries with it an underlying threat to existing quotas and to the principle of targeting places primarily at those in greatest need of *physical or legal protection*. It appears inevitable that such cases will be presented to resettlement countries as Quota submissions. This is already evidenced by the recent submission of cases from the Middle East, presently in Indonesia. These are people who would may well have been dealt with as asylum seekers in Australia or New Zealand had they reached their destination of choice. When their refugee status had been recognised, such people would normally have been granted status and residence – **outside** the receiving country’s annual refugee quota. For people in this situation, the need for a resettlement solution clearly cannot be disputed. However, it is also true that these are people whose resources allowed them to travel independently, or to seek the services of traffickers, to try and reach a chosen country of asylum. During the past decade, annual quotas have sought to provide protection for some of the world’s most vulnerable refugees, most of whom have neither the opportunity nor the resources to seek asylum in a third country. The use of quota places to resolve the protection needs of “intercepted” cases, therefore inevitably decreases the number of places available to UNHCR for other protection or durable solution cases in refugee camp situations.

THE EXPANSION OF RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES AND/OR EXISTING QUOTAS? - MORE LIBERALISED MIGRATION POLICIES OR BIGGER FENCES?

History continues to demonstrate that, no matter what the obstacles, when the stakes are high enough - people WILL move. This brings us back to the issues of controlled migration, durable solutions, burden sharing and the expansion of refugee quotas.

Of course, those with the money, power and resources may choose to “*electrify*” their fences - or perhaps they may come to a growing realisation that, historically, fortresses have always ultimately fallen to the siege. Just as the need for supplies eventually forced most fortresses to surrender – so the need for migrant labour will inevitably

force many developed countries (with aging populations and declining birth-rates) to lower their drawbridges in one form or another.⁹

If countries are to consider opening up the flow of controlled migration to help stem the flood of asylum seekers and illegal migrants, two questions must be asked:

- Will it work?
- Is it best achieved by an expansion of refugee resettlement programmes in existing and emerging countries of resettlement?

These are complicated and vexed questions:

- The latter course carries with it the possibility that emphasis on the need to respond to the most compelling “physical protection” cases within refugee populations may gradually be eroded in favour of clearing up larger complex caseloads.
- Perhaps even more important is the danger that some countries may begin to see entry into (or expansion of) resettlement as a substitute for their asylum responsibilities – effectively opting out of article 14 of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights.¹⁰

POPULATION POLICIES AND PACKAGING

The recent ICRIIR gathering in Sweden, served to highlight that the post-arrival settlement services in some countries are already under-resourced and integration goals are frequently not being attained within the first generation. Any attempt to significantly expand “refugee quotas” in such a climate, risks a negative response from some receiving societies that could adversely affect existing quotas. There is already considerable confusion, in the minds of the public, over the distinction between refugees, asylum seeker and illegal migrants. The unfortunate consequence of this confusion is usually a lessening rather than a strengthening of support for refugees.

The public may occasionally be galvanised into remarkable and atypical levels of support for particular refugee crises. (Kosovo providing a prime example) The outburst of public generosity may well have resulted as much from the bombardment of the media as it did from the bombardment of Kosovo itself. While the public response was

⁹ A worrying alternative to this is the increasing possibility of eventual “designer populations” – See Final Thoughts from Outside the Square

¹⁰ Article 14 Universal Declaration of Human Rights “Every person shall have the right to seek and enjoy protection from persecution in another country.

immediate and generous, it also gave rise to a two-tier “privileged refugee” situation in New Zealand. Money, specifically donated for use with the Kosovars, resulted in the provision of higher levels of service and material assistance than could be afforded other equally deserving refugees.

Unfortunately, public concern and attention can disappear almost as quickly as the daily newspaper headlines. Kosovo also gave rise to the increased use of various new tools of “temporary protection” - adding to a growing public perception that refugees may only need (or perhaps should only be entitled to) temporary protection.

A number of resettlement countries recognise and accept that their falling populations dictate a very real need to maintain and/or expand their “migration” programmes. However, these same societies may not be keen to accept an increase of people officially entering the country as “refugees.” Ironically, *the same people* entering the country under a different title, perhaps as special migrants under a “Population Enhancement Programme”, might receive quite a different level of public support.

Much depends upon how a migration programme is packaged and whose interests the programme appears to be serving. This may be a sad commentary on the rather thin veneer of most societies’ humanitarian concern, but it is also a hard fact of life.

CONCLUSIONS

- “Protection” should **always** remain the paramount principle in resettlement. While “protection” can be understood in both *narrower* and *broader* terms, the limited number of resettlement places available globally dictates that these should continue to be primarily targeted at refugees deemed to be in greatest need of urgent legal or physical protection.
- Wherever possible, cases presented under the above category should include, in the submission, all members within UNHCR’s revised “family definition” that includes those with demonstrable emotional and/or economic dependency.
- Increasing thought must be given to the most appropriate resettlement countries for “Durable Solution” placements, taking into account the capacity of both refugees and host communities to make resettlement genuinely a durable solution. The presence of existing ethnic/national communities is obviously of considerable advantage in this respect.

- Recognition must also be given to the consequential Family Reunion demands that are precipitated by the acceptance of any new group of refugees.
- UNHCR is hopeful that increased use of resettlement as “a durable solution” may provide a much-needed and speedier resolution to the permanent placement of many more refugees. However, governments must be discouraged from adopting any policy that seeks to link increased resettlement quotas to a *decrease* in asylum obligations.
- If governments cannot be dissuaded from continuing their present “interception” activities, they have a responsibility to assist UNHCR by providing additional resourcing to facilitate the assessment of ALL claims to refugee status made by intercepted/interdicted persons.
- There is little doubt that the countries with the capacity and need for additional population, will be best served by finding improved avenues for the controlled and managed movement of migrating or fleeing people. Otherwise, they will be condemned to ever-higher fences and ever-improving pole-vaulters.

For the author, the jury is still very much out on the question of whether or not expanded refugee resettlement programmes can effectively serve the dual role of protecting the interests of the world’s most vulnerable refugees and assisting in the managed migration of others.

A FEW FINAL THOUGHTS FROM “OUTSIDE THE SQUARE

In the end, *successful globalisation* (if such a construct is attainable) will only be achieved when we begin to redress the vast imbalances of power and resources that currently give rise to the need for fences.

No long-term thinking on the issue of migration should ignore the GW-PH-GE factors:

- ◆ Global Warming
- ◆ Public Health
- ◆ Genetic Engineering

There can no longer be any question as to whether the planet is warming up. The only legitimate debate revolves around the impacts of the warming process. As warming continues and climatic changes

occur, the environment in various regions becomes more or less suitable for the establishment or retention of some species of animal, insect, marine or plant life. Mosquito-borne diseases, previously unknown in some regions, are already beginning to appear and cause concern for relevant authorities. Likewise there is a rapid depletion of some fish stocks and an increase in toxic algal bloom in many shellfish and other forms of marine life. In the past few years, there have been devastating outbreaks of Foot and Mouth, Swine Flu and Chicken Virus giving rise to renewed concerns about the fragility of the planet's food chain.

The full ramifications and horror of the HIV/AIDS pandemic are only just beginning to be fully appreciated by those who have so far remained largely unaffected by them. Increases in outbreaks of MDR TB and the declining effectiveness of many of the world's current antibiotics are causing growing concern for world health authorities. Such concerns will inevitably have an increasing impact upon health screening policies related to travel and migration.

In the past few years, scientific advances have been outstripping ethical debate at an alarming rate. Recent successes in the Human Genome Project and related genetic experimentation, now sees mankind on the threshold of many new possibilities. If science is to be believed, the potential for human cloning and "designer babies"¹¹ already exists. Some sources claim that the technology may already be in use. Theoretically, we are reaching a new point in human history where genetics could potentially offer "designer populations" with the possibility of tailoring the physical, mental and emotional attributes of its prodigies. Those who remember the past and care about the future would do well to involve themselves in the debate on genetics and ethics. While advances in genetics may indeed offer many desirable benefits, the science also has the potential to redefine the future of the human race.

Peter Cotton

DIRECTOR

RMS NEW ZEALAND

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¹¹ NZ Herald, Monday July 2, 2001 – "Clamp on plans to clone baby"