UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES UNHCR RESPONSE TO THE LIBERIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

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MIAD/SOC-SCIE/4I146/2004-2005

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DIPLOMACY (MIAD)

FEBRUARY 2005

CERTIFICATION

This work entitled, "United Nations High Commission For Refugees UNHCR Response To The Liberian Refugee Crisis" meets the regulation governing the award of degree of Masters in International Affairs and Diplomacy (MIAD) of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge.

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DEDICATION

TO MY SOULMATE, FRIEND AND LOVING WIFE, MFON.

YOU CAUGHT MY VISION AND SUSTAINED IT TO REALITY.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PRAISE AND GLORY BE TO THE **ALMIGHTY GOD** OF ALL GRACE FROM WHOM ALL MERCIES FLOW.

MY SINCERE THANKS GOES TO MY DEAREST, MOST AFFECTIONATE WIFE **MRS MFON O. IDIKA** FOR HER RESILIENCE AND ASTUTE ENCOURAGEMENT THROUGH OUT THE MONTHS OF STUDY AND THIS RESEARCH.

SAME GOES TO MY SUPERVISOR, **DR. EJEMBI A. UNOBE**, OTHER LECTURERS ESPECIALLY **DR. KAYODE OMOJUWA, DR. DUNMOYE, DR. HUDU, DR. ODOFIN, DR. IZAH** ALL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA FOR YOUR MENTORSHIP AND OBJECTIVE NOTURING.

IN THE SAME VEIN I OWE A WORLD OF THANKS TO MY COLLEAGUES OF THE **MIAD 6 CLASS** WHO THROUGH VARIOUS INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING EXERCISES AND SCHOLARLY DISCUSSES, PRODUCED IN ME THE QUALITY ACCEPTABLE OF THIS WORK.

FINALLY, I THANK MOST PROFUSELY, MY SIBLINGS AND **ENTIRE FAMILY** FOR STANDING BY ME THROUGH IT ALL.

ABSTRACT

This research set out to examine the UNHCR's response to the Liberian refugee crisis. Data for the research was collected from secondary sources alone. The study revealed that since the outbreak of the Liberian crisis, there has been consistent displacement of people from their homes. While some were internally displaced, others sought to take refuge outside their country. Notable among countries that served as haven for Liberation refugees was Guinea.

Significantly, in this refugee crisis, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees UNHCR played a significant role in a number of ways. It not also facilitated reintegration and resettlement of the refugees but was also actively involved in providing welfare for the refugees. Going by the Herculean task of managing and coordinating refugees which only the UNHCR presently carry out, it was suggested in this study that more international and non international organizations be involved in refugee management.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For over two decades, the West African sub-region has not known peace. The sub-region has witnessed the worst form of political crisis, resulting into civil wars, guerrilla wars, rebellious wars, insurrections, etc.

This regrettable incidence has turned the west-African sub-region into a hotbed of crises and has resulted to deaths, displacement of populations and political instability.

Of all the countries, Liberia stands out with the worst record of notoriety. The crisis in Liberia contributed greatly to other upheavals in the sub-region.

Historically, the political crisis in Liberia can be traced to the coming into power of Samuel Doe on April 12, 1980. A development which did not go down well with the 'Americo-Liberians' who had been ruling the country since independence.

The succeeding events after Doe's coming to power, which included the coup attempt by Thomas Quiwonkpa and his later execution, sparked off anger among the Americo-Liberians who considered no other option but a rebellion against the government.

They therefore formed the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) as a rebel force in December 1989, under the leadership of Charles Taylor, and invaded the country with the primary aim of toppling the government of Samuel Doe and installing Charles Taylor as President.

What followed was a civil war, with enormous effects on Liberians and the entire West African sub-region.

But for efforts aimed at ending the war, by sub regional, continental and global organizations, the conflict in Liberia would still be raging on with no prospect of peace.

One area where the effect of the war has been felt the most, is in the displacement of the Liberian population. They are now scattered in most West African countries. A development that has resulted in serious refugee crisis in the West-African sub-region. One organization that has however been in the forefront of catering for the refugees and championing their reintegration and resettlement is the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNCHR)

1.2 **STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Most of the crisis in the West African sub region can be traced back to the eruption of civil war in Liberia in 1989. Before the crisis in Liberia, the region had no major refugee problems.

Regrettably however, as the Liberian war quickly spiraled out of control in the early 1990s with ethic massacres perpetuated by as many as 11 armed groups, formed largely along ethnic lines, more than half of the country's three million people fled their homes.

The displacement of the population has resulted in major refugee crises in the West African sub region.

But what are the basic remote and immediate causes of the Liberian civil war? What is the effect of the war on Liberians? How are the West African countries coping with the refugee crisis? What percentage of the population was truly displaced? How are the refugees coping with life outside their home countries? What are the efforts made to resettle the refugees back in their home countries? Specifically what role has the UNCHR played in this particular refugee episode?

These are some of the questions that will be answered in this research work.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This study will basically undertake an assessment of the UNCHR in the Liberian refugee crisis

More specifically, its objectives will include:

1. To study the remote and immediate causes of the Liberian civil war. This will provide us with relevant information on causes of other wars in the West African sub region, since the cause of other crises are traceable back to the eruption of the civil war in Liberia.
2. To examine efforts to end the crisis, particularly by sub regional continental and global organizations.
3. To assess the effects of the crisis on Liberians and the refugee crises it generated in the West African sub region.
4. To ascertain the percentage of Liberian refugees outside their country and how they have been resettled in these other countries.
5. To assess the role of the UNCHR in the Liberian refugee crisis
6. To proffer solutions on how to guard against the outbreak of wars in the West African sub region. And also to contribute to knowledge on how the UNCHR can better manage refugees in the world.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS / ASSUMPTIONS

This research will test the following hypothesis

a. The population displacement in Liberia is as a result of the continuous civil war in the country.
b. The UNCHR facilitated a reintegration and realignment of Liberian refugees following the Refugee crisis.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

A good number of works has been written about wars in the West African sub region and the attendant effect on the people of the countries involved, but not much has been written about the percentage of those displaced by the wars and the role of international agencies like UNCHR in containing the effect of crisis.

Although it could be claimed that a number of literature exists, which records the role of the UN but these works are not written with critical knowledge of the situation on ground. They are merely of the Journalistic type writings, rather than of thorough research. As a result only superficial analysis is made.

Clearly, this research work having critically assessed the role of UNCHR will serve as reference material to researchers who intend to carry out further studies on the subject.

Obviously, the findings of this research will provide governments, interested individuals and non-governmental organizations, dealing with refugee matters, the needed information on Liberia's refugee crisis and efforts made to over come them.

These and many more other reasons which will be stated in the comprehensive work justify the significance of this study.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will adopt the conflict of interest theory. This theory is derived from the general conflict theory.

The major postulations of this theory can be summarized as thus:

i. That conflict is a function of social interaction/relationship.
ii. That conflict arises from incompatibility of interests/values.
iii. That conflict situations are synonymous with the process of strategic interaction.
iv. That conflict may be resolved through free negotiation and compromise.

Applying the theory to the realm of politics, Rosert A. Irod (1970:5) opines that conflict of interest paradigm presupposes “clash of interest or amount of incompatibility of the players’ preferences in a given situation of strategic interaction”.

He further asserts as follows:

> *Conflict of interest is a property of the preferences of the participants and structure of the situation in which they found themselves. It does not refer to their behaviour or to the actual outcome of interaction. The basic theme is that the amount of conflict of interest in a situation affects the behaviour of actors and thus outcome. (Irod 1970:5).*

In the light of the above theoretical background, therefore, the internecine war in Liberia can be seen as a clear manifestation of ‘clash’ of interests between the contending/conflicting parties. In other words, the problem is better understood as an objective consequence of the perennial incompatibility of interests/values existing between the warring factions of the Liberian population.

The choice of conflict of interest theory in this study is necessitated by its aptness in producing a systematic explanation to the subject matter under study.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research, data will be collected from secondary sources only. These include books, journals, newspaper articles, projects i.e. (unpublished thesis). Other related materials on the topic under research from United Nations documents and official statement of statistics of refugees and amount of money spent on them will be consulted

Data collected will be descriptively analyzed.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This research will investigate the causes and effect of the Liberian crisis. It will particularly examine the role of the UNCHR in the Refugee crisis that emanated.

Although reference will be made to other countries with similar refugee crisis, the focus will be on Liberia and how Liberians have been able to find their bearing in the midst of the violence in their home country.

Like every other research work, this study will be constrained by a number of factors, ranging from unavailability of accurate data on the actual percentage of refugees to inability to visit refugee camps where they are resettled.

Although these constraints would take its toll on the quality of this work, effort will be made to overcome them, through adequate use of available authoritative materials.

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CHAPTER TWO

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Scholars of International Relations, Humanitarian and International organizations have given various interpretations to who a refugee is and in what circumstances one can be considered a refugee. This chapter examines some of these interpretations as well as some literatures on the Liberian crisis.

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF REFUGEE

According to the advanced oxford dictionary (1993) a refugee is 'someone in flight, who seeks to escape conditions or personal circumstances found to be intolerable'. The destination in this case is not relevant; rather the person flees to gain freedom and safety. The reason for flight may be numerous; it could be flight from oppression, from threat to life or liberty, flight from prosecution, natural disasters of earthquakes, flood, drought and famine. From these circumstances, a refugee could be referred to as a person whose personal liberties have been compromised and resultantly have driven from his or her home to seek refuge, especially in a foreign country, from war, ethno-religious persecution and political troubles.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the word" refugees" is frequently used by the media, politicians and the general public to describe anyone who has been obliged to abandon his or her usual place of residence. Normally when the word is used in this general manner, little effort is made to distinguish between people who have had to slave in their own country and those who have been displaced within their homeland. Nor is much attention paid to the causes of flight. Whether people are escaping from prosecution, political violence, communal conflict, ecological disaster or poverty, they are assumed to be qualified for the title of refugee.

Under International law, however, the refugee concept has a much more specific meaning. As established in the 1951 UN convention relating to the status of refugees, the word refugee refers to a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion or nationality and is unable to avail himself of the protection of that country".

In the years since the 1951 convention was established, legal experts have examined this somewhat complex definition in great depth, focusing particularly on the meaning of phrases such as "well-founded fear", persecution" and membership of a particular social group. Refugees, according to the UNHCR refer to those people who have had

to leave or remain outside of their homeland because of serious threats to their life and liberty.

This incisive approach to the refugee definition has been formulated in the Organization of African Unity's 1969 Refugee convention, which was established in response to the growing scale of the African Refugee problem during the period of decolonization and national liberation. The term ‘’refugee" it states, "shall apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality".

Regional refugee instrument in other parts of the world, most notably in Central and South America have adopted a similar approach, placing less emphasis on a fear of persecution and more on objective conditions of violence and disorder in the country of origin.

Experience in the less-developed regions of the world has demonstrated that when large numbers of people move across an international border, it is not usually possible to ascertain whether every person involved in the influx actually meets the criteria for refugee status.

Low-income countries simply do not have the logistical, administrative and financial capacity to undertake such a demanding and time-consuming task. When conditions are objectively dangerous in a country of origin, individual screening of new arrivals may also not be necessary. It is for this reason that refugees from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East are frequently recognized on a group or prima facie basis.

According to the UN convention on Refugees, 1951, a person is a refugee only when his application has been accepted by the home office of the host country. When a person has lodged an asylum claim with the immigration and nationality directorate and in waiting for a decision on their claim, they are called asylum seekers. An asylum seeker is granted refugees status if he/she meets the criteria laid down in the 1951 UN convention on refugees.

Many commentators argue that the 1951 United Nations definition of refugee is too restrictive. This confines the condition to those fleeing their home states for reasons of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

The 1951 definition is the only one to have widespread international acceptance, but recent transformation in International

Relations, especially the demise of communism, have led to greater emphasis on the economic and humanitarian categories. Thus, West Germany recognized the migration rights of East Germans and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) recognized the humanitarian categories of refugees. Examples being victims of wars, famines, communal violence and other social or ecological upheavals.

The OAU convention adopted the above definition in its article's paragraph I titled definitions of the term "refugee" but it went a step further in its own definition in article 1, paragraph 2 that, "The term "Refugee" shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality (OAU 1996;2;2)

The UN and OAU conventions are unanimous in their interpretations of clauses which actually satisfy those that cannot be granted protection under their conventions. But, the most commonly accepted definition of a refugee is that of the United Nations 1951.

From the above review, it is evident that refugee refers to the people escaping their country of origin or habitual residence for

religious or political reasons. Furthermore Refugee could mean a person taking refuge in a foreign country from war or persecution or national disaster. The word “refugee” also applies to displaced persons and victims of circumstances that could be best referred to as complex emergencies.

2.2 THE LIBERIAN CRISIS

According to Givens (et al) 1986, Liberia has a unique history among African States. It was originally established as a colony by the philanthropic National colonalization society of American slaves. Land was obtained by treaty with indigenous tribes in 1822 and was subsequently settled. In 1847, Liberia proclaimed itself as an independent republic but failed to live up to that name. Later generations of American Liberians established a slave-state of their own, enslaving the indigenous Liberians.

Givens et - al noted that slavery continued until 1936, when it was abolished in the wake of Scandals and the League of Nations investigations. The scandal did not manage to unseat the True Whig Party from its then more than half–century of domination of Liberian politics, and so Liberia continued as a republic under the Whigs until April of 1980, when M.Sgt Samuel K. Doe and his Peoples’ Redemption

Council (PRC) staged a bloody coup. The PRC established itself as an interim regime until 1985. When elections were held, Doe and the PRC were returned to power amidst allegations of election fraud.

THE LIBERIAN WAR.

According to Osaghae (1990), in Late December of 1989, a group of rebels entered Liberia's Nimba county from the Cote d' Ivoire. They were led by Charles Taylor, a former member of Doe's cabinet who was removed from office on charges of embezzlement. Doe's response was a harsh crackdown on his own people in an attempt to stop Taylor's group which called itself the National Patriotic Front(NPF). But Doe's crackdown served only to drive many Nimba county residents into the NPF ranks.

Osaghae records that by February 1990, the war had settled into a predictable pattern of low-intensity skirmishes and atrocities. NPF held Nimba county and was slowly taking other parts of Liberia away from Doe's forces. In the meantime, Doe's military was deserting him and taking their weapons with them. Many ended up in NPF ranks. Doe in a frantic attempt to enlarge his military, press-ganged thieves from the waterside district, only to have them desert and use their new-found weapons to enhance their old profession.

The atrocities became wide spread and followed tribal lines. Four of Liberia's sixteen tribes were prominent in the civil war. The Krahn and Mandingo tribes supported Doe, while the Gio and Mano tribes backed the NPF. The final animosities among these groups verged on genocidal trend. In one incident, Doe's death squads slaughtered more than 600 Gio and Mano civilians inside the St. Peter's Lutheran Church of Monrovia, the civilian were seeking asylum from Doe's troops. NPF forces were also engaged in one case of breaking into a mosque and killing Mandingo members.

The rebels encircled Manrovia in June. On June 4, an NPF squad was ambushed and Taylor's strategist, the American mercenary Elmer Johnson was killed. Shortly afterwards, Prince Yormie Johnson left the NPF with a group of followers to form the independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). These two events crippled the NPF and rendered it mostly ineffective for the rest of the conflict. The NPF spent the rest of the war looting and executing civilians.

Following this, Omede (1994) stated that in August of 1990, the flow of refugees into neighbouring states caused the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to send in the 3000 member ECOWAS monitoring Group (ECOMOG). However, ECOMOG was unable to stop the fighting and the INPFL continued to advance

onto Monrovia, eventually being able to exercise control over extensive portions of it. Doe spent the last months hiding in his Presidential mansion in the company of his "Sautes" Presidential guard battalion. He however left the Presidential mansion on September 9th and journeyed to the ECOMOG headquarters, but was intercepted by Prince Johnson. Doe's accompanying body guards were killed and Doe was mutilated and tortured before being killed.

According to Omede, upon Doe's death there were no less than four people claiming control of Liberia. ECOMOG tolerated these for a while, but later supported Professor Amos Sawyer as head of an interim government based in Ghana. In February 1991, ECOMOG, forced the rival factions to sign a peace treaty and began disarming, but Charles Taylor claimed he would continue to protest Sawyer's government. Taylor's NPF was reported to be engaging in banditry and raiding in neighbouring Sierra-Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. Both Johnson's INPFL and General Hezekiah Bowen's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) supported Sawyer but later rebelled.

According to the UNCHR, the war created an estimated 700,000 refugees and an unknown number of civilian casualties. International trade channels had been eliminated by fighting, cutting off-food shipments and causing deaths from starvation among many civilians.

2.3 OVERVIEW OF REVIEW

This literature reviewed various interpretations and perspectives on who truly is a refugee and what International conventions give such privileges to refugees. The review also examined works of scholars on the Liberian crisis, the factors that led to its breakout and the implications of the crisis, especially with regards to the refugee implication. What the works did not assess is the response of the United Nations High Commission for refugees (UNHCR) to the refugee crisis that erupted in Liberia following the political crisis. This is the gap this research intends to fill.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 BACKGROUND OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES.

Throughout the history of mankind people have been uprooted against their will. Time and again, lives and values, built from generation to generation, have been shattered without warning. Time and again, people in fear, individuals or whole groups, persecuted on account of their profound convictions, have had to make a most dramatic decision: to take the uncertain, even perilous road to exile, from home, community and homeland, from friends and often family, rather than bear the intolerable burdens of injustice and oppression.

But, throughout history, mankind has also reacted to such upheavals and brought succor to the uprooted. Be it through individual gestures or concerted action and solidarity, they have been offered help and shelter and the chance to become dignified and free citizens again. Through the ages the giving of sanctuary has become one of the noblest traditions of human nature and communities, institutions, cities and nations have generously opened their doors to refugees and - a fact which should be stressed - many refugees have, in turn, been valuable assets to those who have taken them in.

It was only in the twentieth century, however, after the cataclysm of the First World War and the fall of empires, that governments came to realize the need to treat the refugee problem as an issue which, in nature and importance, went far beyond their national frontiers, and was a responsibility of what has come to be known as the "international community".

In 1921, the young League of Nations appointed Fridtiof Nansen as High Commissioner for Refugees. At that time, when a universal definition of what is meant by the word refugee was still a long way off, he was to serve as High Commissioner for Russian refugees. Fridtjof Nansen headed the new body and brought life and inspiration to it. In 1922, a resounding tribute was paid to him when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Little by little, Nansen's efforts were extended to include other categories of refugees, more particularly the Armenians in 1926. One of his key ideas was to create a passport for refugees. The Nansen Passport was much more than a purely functional document: it restored safety, dignity and hope to its holder and gave him back some of his lost identity. After 1930, the year of Fridtjof Nansen's death, the League of Nations entrusted the protection of refugees to the Nansen International Office for Refugees, better known simply as the "Nansen Office". Today, the spirit and memory of Nansen is still alive and is given

practical effect when, once a year, the Nansen Medal is awarded for outstanding services to the cause of refugees.

While the Nansen Office was pursuing its endeavours, and was, in turn, awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize in 1938, the Second World War was already looming on the horizon - a war that would annihilate millions of human beings, overwhelm entire countries and open the floodgates to new and tragic mass exoduses of the uprooted.

It is a strange truth, however, that man constantly strives to restore what man himself undoes. Thus, even in the darkest hours of the Second World War, refugees and displaced persons were not forgotten at the international level. As early as 1943, 44 nations gathered in Washington to sign the Charter of a new international body which was to be called the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration(UNRRA). One of its prime tasks would be to help the uprooted and to repatriate them after the War whenever circumstances permitted.

With the end of the War in 1945, UNRRA started to tackle the task of voluntary repatriation. That same year, when despair was gradually being replaced by the hope of a better society for the future, saw the adoption on October 24, of the San Francisco Charter leading to the creation of the United Nations. The United Nations was born with the

noble objectives of maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations based on the principles of equal rights and self-determination, and enhancing international cooperation in solving political, economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.

The Relief and Rehabilitation Administration completed its task in 1947 and, through its efforts, seven million persons returned to their homes. Thus, after years of anxiety in the ruins of war followed the emotional moment of return to life in peace.

Unfortunately, there were many other refugees or displaced persons who could not, or did not, wish to return to their countries; at the same time new refugee problems were emerging. A further major international effort was required, and in 1947 another temporary body, the International Refugees Organization(IRO), was set up by the United Nations. Within a limited period of time the IRO organized the resettlement of more than 1.5 million refugees in new host countries, often overseas.

Despite the success of the IRO, however, it could not solve all the refugee problems of the post-war period, and in December 1949, while the IRO was still pursuing its activities, the General Assembly of the

United Nations[1] decided in principle to establish the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UNHCR actually came into existence on 1 January 1951 after the adoption of its Statute by the General Assembly in December 1950.[2] UNHCR was founded on respect for human rights. How ironic then that the very violation of these human values has made of UNHCR a virtually permanent feature of the international community. Initially, UNHCR was established for a period of three years after which the General Assembly was to decide whether it should be prolonged. Fifty two years after its establishment, it is evident that the UNHCR has come to stay as a permanent body. It forms part of the handful of organizations which, year after year, observe their anniversaries with a certain feeling of regret. Vision and foresight marked the foundation of UNHCR as a body to deal with refugee problems on a non-political and purely humanitarian basis - a fact that the United Nations can take pride in. But the fact that UNHCR has now existed for five decades is nothing to be proud of - rather, it is a sad reflection of our times: without persecution, without violations of human rights, without armed conflicts there would be no need for UNHCR.

It is worth dwelling momentarily on the actual definition of a refugee as contained in the Statute of UNHCR. A refugee is any person who "owing

to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear or for reasons other than personal convenience, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...". So, a refugee is someone who is a victim of intolerance, someone forced to break - often abruptly - his links with the past, with friends or even with family, with his environment, someone forced to cross an international border in search of safety, often taking practically nothing with him.

In the United Nations the arduous and vital task of analyzing and endeavoring to eliminate the causes of exodus and flight lies with political fora. Whereas one may sometimes deplore the inability of government members of the United Nations to tackle the causes creating refugees, one may take pride in the ability and readiness of governments to support the humanitarian bodies, such as UNHCR, dealing with the symptoms of the problems. Governments recognized long ago that, irrespective of the causes of the conflagration or of the accident, the victim must be helped until he is back on his feet.

The concept of non-defilement appears in two universally binding instruments: the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of

Refugees, supplemented by the 1967 Protocol. These instruments, to which 90 countries from every continent have acceded to as at date, lays down minimum standards for the treatment of refugees which should enable them, as far as possible, to lead a normal and independent life.

There are also conventions relating either to refugees or to asylum that form part of a more regional approach to these problems, such as the Organization of African Unity's 1969 Convention governing the Specific Aspects of the Problem of Refugees in Africa, and regional legal instruments in Latin America and Europe.

To increase the number of accessions to international instruments, to make sure that national legislation fully reflects their clauses and, above all, to ensure that these provisions and a number of universally recognized values are effectively applied to refugees throughout the world, is the substance of UNHCR's task regarding legal protection. It is a strenuous effort at all times. Sometimes rapid interventions are required to save a person from unbearable hardship, persecution, or even death.

It is quite remarkable that the definition of a refugee, formulated in 1950 in an essentially European context and marked by the traumatic

experience of the Second World War and the period of the Cold War, should still apply today to situations which, of course, could not have been foreseen 30 years ago.

Notwithstanding, the General Assembly has been obliged, by successive resolutions, to extend UNHCR's area of competence. Indeed, UNHCR has had to keep pace with history in the making. The foundations were solid and remain unchanged, but the edifice itself has been shaped by time and circumstances. And the world has changed dramatically since the United Nations came into existence. More than a hundred new countries have become independent, sometimes at the cost of violent struggles. Developments - or lack of developments - in power relations throughout the world have given rise to tensions, disturbances and national or international conflicts. Under the impact of all these events, in the whirlwind of suffering that they have engendered, the number of refugees or displaced persons has been great, indeed far too great.

Was it then possible to make use of UNHCR, the body created by the community of nations under other circumstances? Indeed it was. UNHCR evolved and adapted to new situations. The operations for voluntary repatriation and now also rehabilitation of refugees in their

countries of origin provides an example of new tasks that were added to UNHCR's traditional list.

The most gratifying event for the great majority of refugees is precisely the possibility of returning home, to their own country, following a change in circumstances, for example, the end of a conflict, the restoration of peace and human rights, and the achievement of national independence. The long-cherished dream comes true: with deep emotion, the refugees again cross the border - but this time in full daylight - to go back - to rebuild their homes in their own environment.

The Statute of the High Commissioner, which requires him to seek permanent solutions - today we prefer to say durable solutions - to the refugee problem, provides for such voluntary repatriation. But it has to be organized - it can often mean wide-ranging operations - and in many cases the repatriated refugees have to be helped to put down roots again, because they sometimes return to empty, even destroyed homes, with as little as they had when they left.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the governments concerned have on many occasions turned to UNHCR, requesting the Office to organize the repatriation and initial rehabilitation of the returnees. Thus UNHCR, in the wake of national or

international treaties can, and often does, through its humanitarian action, participate in the arrangements for consolidating a newly-acquired peace. UNHCR is also sometimes asked to extend its assistance to groups of persons who have been displaced within their national frontiers during conflicts and - at the same time as those repatriated - also return to their homes when peace has come. Example of large-scale UNHCR operations for the repatriation and return of refugees and displaced persons are plentiful. A rapid overview of these operations in chronological order will take us from one country and continent to another. It will be a reassuring exercise for it will show that all over the world - although new refugee problems continually arise - solutions to existing problems continue to be found. Many of the examples demonstrate that rapid solutions to refugee problems strengthen the forces for peace and, conversely, that failure to provide such solutions can lead to the shattering of peace.

The first of such large-scale repatriation operations in which UNHCR was involved took place in 1962 with the return of some 250,000 Algerians, who had fled to Morocco and Tunisia during the strife in their country. In 1972, some 10 million refugees returned home to their newly-independent state, Bangladesh, after months in relief camps in India. That same year, UNHCR helped to bring back some 150,000

Sudanese refugees from four adjoining countries and set up an operation for their rehabilitation. In 1973, UNHCR was instrumental in organizing a two-way movement of large numbers of people between Bangladesh and Pakistan - one of history's largest airlift population exchanges. Then - beginning in 1974 came the news of the independence of the territories in Africa formerly under Portuguese administration. Hundreds of thousands of refugees returned to their homes in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola; these were moments of history and emotion. In 1975, the General Assembly[3] requested the High Commissioner "to intensify his efforts on behalf of refugees in Africa, notably those returning to their countries following independence...".

In 1978, following an agreement between the two countries, UNHCR was asked to facilitate the repatriation and initial rehabilitation in their country of origin of 200,000 people from Burma who had taken refuge in Bangladesh. The repatriation of 150,000 Zairian refugees living in Angola also commenced in 1978. Conversely, in 1979, UNHCR helped to ensure the return home of approximately 50,000 Angolans in Zaire. In the same year, 100,000 refugees from Nicaragua who were living in Costa Rica and Honduras were repatriated. In 1979 and 1980, refugees returned to Equatorial Guinea, Kampuchea and Uganda and received

basic assistance. Today the return of refugees to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, although still limited in numbers, is under way and negotiations are taking place in Bangkok and Phnom Penh to ensure the safe voluntary return and integration of further groups of Kampucheans. In the Horn of Africa the return movement of Ethiopia has begun, and plans are being worked out to extend the present repatriation program. The most recent repatriation operation brought to a successful conclusion has been the one which has seen 650,000 refugees and internally displaced persons go back to their homes in independent Zimbabwe. Finally, UNHCR has just embarked on a program for the return and initial re-adaptation of citizens from Chad who were uprooted during the troubles in their country.

This list shows important events in which governments joined forces under the umbrella of UNHCR, as the strictly non-political international body, to carry out some of the largest population movements in history and thus achieve the most desirable solution to numerous refugee problems. It demonstrates that the process of peace building can be dynamic when there are institutions through which the consensus of nations can be expressed.

Repatriation is not, unfortunately, the automatic result of all efforts made to help refugees. In some cases they have to settle for long periods - or perhaps forever - in the countries, in which they were first received, also called the countries of first asylum. The task of assisting them in such circumstances can be overwhelming, since the countries that are geographically or geo-politically situated in the "front line" for refugees are frequently developing countries - some of them belonging to the group of the least developed. More often than not they take in refugees with magnanimity and generosity, but they have to contend with their own economic and social problems and, in the beginning, the presence of refugees can be a heavy burden on them. This is particularly true in some countries where many factors may hinder the early integration of refugees or make it difficult, even illusionary: lack of arable land, water or pasture in the countryside; lack of job opportunities in the towns; lack of infrastructure capable of absorbing these new groups when already burdened by a very difficult situation; psychological, social and political problems. Refugees in need, wherever they are, can generate tension with the local population that is also poor or, at the very least, fears competition for limited resources. In many ways, the mere presence of refugees may give rise to suspicion, unrest and agitation with numerous repercussions; and the situation may become even more disturbing

when the refugees have nothing, are deprived of support and are apprehensive about their future.

Will they be helped? Will they be heard? This is where concerted national and international efforts can make for less anxiety, bring stability to a situation fraught with danger and prevent minor or major conflicts from breaking out. It is in such situations that UNHCR can help to encourage a decisive display of international solidarity. Programs - sometimes of considerable magnitude - will be worked out, financed and implemented in order to provide refugees with relief to meet their immediate need for housing, food, health, or long-term settlement leading to self-sufficiency, the ultimate aim of all UNHCR programs.

Whenever refugees cannot return freely to their own countries or stay in the country of first asylum, UNHCR has a role to play in resettling them in third countries. It is a delicate operation because in some sense it consolidates their uprooting. But, here again, forces unite to try to ensure the success of the operation: governments, non-governmental organizations, individuals, all will play their role, endeavoring to work in harmony and help their fellow man in need. Thus, in September 1973, as a result of events in Chile, UNHCR found itself charged with an urgent resettlement operation. A few years later, the Office could look

back on an operation which had found solutions for more than 25.000 refugees. But, while that chapter was being closed, a new drama requiring speedy solutions unfolded in South East Asia. Again the international community rose to the occasion. As of today, 700.000 Indo- Chinese refugees - including 400,000 "boat people" whose odyssey still moves the world - have been resettled over the last five years. Many of them have been reunited with members of their family, thus ending the ordeal of separation.

3.2 The Role of United Nations of High Commissioner for Refugees in Africa and in the World

Since its creation in 1951, UNHCR's primary role has been to ensure that states are aware of, and act on, their obligations to protect refugees and persons seeking asylum.

The regime of refugee protection is based on the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol as well as other regional instruments.

Table I: Top Ten Countries of Asylum

Country of Asylum	Main Countries of Origin	Refugees
Iran	Afghanistan, Iraq	2,014,000
Germany	Various	1,266,000
Pakistan	Afghanistan	1,200,000
United States	Various	597,000
F.R. Yugoslavia	Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia	548,000
DR Congo	Burundi, Rwanda, Sudan Angola	450,000
Sudan	Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia	405,000
Guinea	Liberia, Sierra Leone	401,000
Ethiopia	Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti, Kyenwa	354,000
Cote d'ivoire	Liberia	210,000

Source: UNHRC – Refugees Magazine. Volume No.109, March 1997.

UNHCR at Glance

UNHCR protects and assists more than 22 million people who have fled war or persecution. The number of uprooted people around the world, including all estimated displaced within their own countries, approaches 50 million. One out of every 120 people on earth has been forced into flight.

Table II: Global Statistics

	Refugees	Returnees	Other of concern	Internally displaced people	Total of concern to UNHCR
Africa	4,341,000	1,6,93,000	-	2,058,000	8,091,000
Asia	4,809,000	1,241,1000	156,000	1,719,000	7,925,000
Europe	3,166,000	308,000	1,209,000	1,066,000	5,749,000
Latin America	88,000	70,000	-	11,000	169,000
North America	720,000	-	-	-	720,000
Ocenada	75,000	-	-	-	75,000
Total	13,200,000	3,311,000	1,365,000	4,854,000	22,729,000

Source: UNHCR – Refugee Magazine: Vol. No. 109 March 1997

Table III: Top Ten Countries of Origin

Country of Origin	Main Countries of Asylum	Refugees
Afghanistan	Iran, Pakistan, CIS, India	2,675,000
Bosnia, Herzegovina	Croatia, F.R. Yugoslavia, Germany	700,000
Iraq	Iran, Saudi Arabia	630,000
Liberia	Guinea, Cote d'ivoire, Ghana, Sierra Leone	480,000
Somalia	Djibouti Ethiopia, Kenya, Yemen	452,000
Sudan	Uganda, DRC, Kenya, Ethiopia	407,000

Eritrea	Sudan	398,000
Angola	DRC, Zambia, Congo-Brazza, Namibia	300,000
Sierra Leone	Guinea, Liberia, Gambia, Cote d'ivore	280,000
Rwanda	DRC, Congo-Brazzaville, other	225,000

Source: UNHCR – Refugee Magazine. Vol. No. 109, March 1997, pp. 33 – 31.

Table IV: Major Repatriation

They include both organized and spontaneous repatriation.

Country of Origin	Country of Asylum	Caseload at Peak	Returnees	Report began
Afghanistan	Pakistan, Iran	6,300,000 (1992)	3,900,000	1989
Rwanda	Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, DRC	2,200,000 (1994)	1,800,000	1994
Iraq	Iran, Saudi-Arabia, Turkey	1,780,000 (1991)	1,517,000	1991
Mozambique	Malawi, S. Africa, Zimbabwe	1,700,000	1,683,000	1992-1995
Bosnia Herzegovina	F.R. Yugoslavia Germany, other	1,200,000 (1995)	189,000	1996
Ethiopia	Kenya, Sudan, other	970,000 (1992)	600,000	1991

Somalia	Ethiopia, Kenya, other	970,000 (1989)	600,000	1991
Burundi	Rwanda, Tanzania, DRC	700,000 (1993)	400,000	1994
Togo	Ghana, Benin	300,000 (1992)	293,500	1994
Myanmar	Bangladesh	250,000 (1992)	229,000	1992
Viet Nam	Hong Kong, Indonesia, other	143,000 (1979)	110,000	1975
Mali	Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Algeria	175,000 (1994)	116,000	1996
Lao P.D.R.	Thailand, China, Other	127,000 (1979)	27,000	1975
Tajikistan	Afghanistan	60,000 (1992)	53,000	1993

Source: UNHCR – Refugee Magazine: Vol. No. 109 March 1997. pp 30 – 31.

Funding (10/11/1997)

All figures in US $million.

(a) General programs, target: 459.6 (total available: 346.1 (76%). 1997 Budget: Us $ 1,189.8.

(b) Special programs, target: 737.2 1998 protected budget: US $995.

Requirements for major special programs emergencies in 1997.

	Required	Contributed
*** Africa**		
Great lakes operation	140.9	119.6
Rwanda	114.0	61.2
Horn of Africa	39.3	24.4
Angola Repatriation	21.0	13.8
Mali Repatriation	15.7	7.7
Liberia	14.1	8.5
*** Asia**		
Post Comprehensive Plan of Action	23.7	17.5
Myanmar Repatriation	11.5	8.1
Sri Lanka Repatriation	8.5	5.3
Cambodia	2.5	0.0
*** Latin America**		
Guatemala Repatriation	9.9	7.9
***SW, Central Asia**		
Afghanistan Repatriation	19.9	20.0
Tajikistan	4.7	1.0
*** Europe**		
Ex-Yugoslavia	220.1	179.9
CIS countries	38.1	26.8

Source: UNHCR – Refugee Magazine: Vol. No.109 March 1997

Table V: Major Contributors to UNHCR

Top Ten Donor 1st Jan. 31 Dec. 1996

	Countries	**Money US $**
1	U.S.A	262,200,000
2	E.C.	147,400,000
3	Japan	130,000,000
4	Sweden	72,100,000
5	Denmark	55,700,000
6	Netherlands	54,600,000
7	United Kingdom	53,900,000
8	Norway	38,100,000
9	Switzerland	23,300,000
10	Germany	22,000,000

Source: UNHCR – Refugee Magazine; Vol. No. 109 March 1997

UNHCR Staffing all over the World

UNCHR staff members: (01/11/1997) including short-term staff.

Headquarters: 953

In the field: 4664

Total: 5,617

UNCHR Offices including Headquarters 249 in 122 countries.

Table VI: Principal Internally Displaced Populations of Concern to UNHCR

Sierra Leone	1,500,000
Liberia	971,000
Bosnia, Herzegovina	800,00
Azerbaijan	549,000
Afghanistan	310,000
Georgia	280,000
Cyprus	265,000
Burundi	216,000
Sri Lanka	200,000
Russian Federation (Chechnya)	180,000

Source: UNHCR – Refugee Magazine: Vol. No 109 March 1997

UNHCR at Glance

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CHAPTER FOUR

UNHCR RESPONSE TO THE LIBERIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

4.1 MAIN OBJECTIVES OF UNHCR IN LIBERIA

- Advocate the protection and welfare of Liberian returnees and other war-affected populations.
- Ensure that sufficient material assistance and services are provided to stabilize their communities and make return durable.
- Refine assistance to Liberian refugees by encouraging refugee participation and prioritizing activities that foster self-sufficiency.
- Support the gradual, safe and dignified return of individual Liberia refugees; launch and promote organized repatriation should the general security situation sufficiently improve in Liberia.
- Identify the best durable solution for urban refugees through a review of individual cases in line with policy directives and a regionally agreed framework.

2.2 LIBERIAN RETURNEES

UNHCR completed its organized repatriation of Liberian refugees by the end of 1999. Nearly 390,000 persons returned, in an operation began in May 1997. Those who then still wish to return (especially from cote d' Ivoire and Guinea) were helped by a modest repatriation package until June 2000. Reintegration activities in Liberia also continued until June 2000. This deadline was evaluated in the spring in order to ensure the sustainability of reintegration.

Until the outbreak of fighting in Upper Lofa County, UNHCR staff monitored the welfare and safety of returnees and refugees on site. The withdrawal of UN agencies and NGOs heightened concern for the safety of these populations. UNHCR also supported advocacy by civil society groups. The office continued to encourage the observance of human rights, with particular emphasis on women and children's rights, through training and radio programmes. As far as possible this was achieved in conjunction with other UN agencies and advocacy groups. UNHCR also continued to train and nurture law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and other Government institutions.

The long-term Stability of Liberian returnee communities will be enhanced through Quick Impact Projects targeting all populations affected by war. These will cover pressing needs for running water, health, education, community services and income generation. The rehabilitation of basic community services and infrastructure (access to water, health clinics, schools and roads) and income generating activities (including those based on micro-credits) will increase the number of people who can be absorbed in returnee areas. It will also boost local economic autonomy ad self-sufficiency of returnees and their communities.

Family tracing and reunification programmmes for returnee children are important components of reintegration exercise. A training project was designed for Liberian returnee women (e. g. female –Heads of households and High school drop-outs) focused on tie-dying, tailoring, agricultural skills, soap making and personal hygiene. Grinding mills were provided to returnee women, enabling them to process harvested crops in their communities. Agro-forestry and energy-saving schemes were also introduced to improve protection of the environment in areas hosting large concentrations of returnees. Projects include tree nurseries, the use of leaves instead of polythene bags for tree seedlings

and the training of community members in the making of fuel-efficient stoves.

4.3 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

In 2000, UNHCR operated with a total of 96 staff (of whom 21 are international and 75 national). Six Junior Professional Officers augmented operational capacity. In addition to its Branch Office in Monrovia, UNHCR has offices in Gbarnga, Harper, Kolahun, Vahun, Voinjama and Zwedru. The latter are the main returnee and refugee host areas, where living conditions for staff are difficult for want of clean water, electricity and other basic facilities, of access to health services. Given the insecurity in Upper Lofa, the Office reviewed its presence in the area for regional coordination and policy setting, UNHCR in Liberia falls within the limit of the Regional Directorate for Central and West Africa based in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

4.4 COORDINATION

UNHCR coordinates with the Government, NGOs, and other UN agencies including World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF and the donor community through regular meetings, workshops and targeted training in continuing, to strengthen local organizations, particularly the Liberian

Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (UNHCR's Government counterpart), as well as local authorities, security organs and local NGOs. Refugees and returnees showing leadership potential were encouraged to assume greater responsibility through participation in the delivery of reintegration assistance.

UNHCR ANNUAL BUDGET FOR LIBERIAN REFUGEES

Activities and services	Annual programme	Suplementary programme	Total
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	3,080,482	0	3,080,482
Community services	590,600	8,000	598,600
Crop production	338,900	0	338,900
Domestic Needs /Household support	736,600	200,000	936,600
Education	1,565,100	0	1,565,100
Fisheries	20,000	0	20,000
Food	78,100	20,000	98,100
Forestry	197,500	0	197,500
Health / Nutrition	1, 257,000	20,000	1,277,000
Income generation	563,000	0	563,00
Legal Assistance	214,000	20,000	234,000

Livestock	50,000	0	50,000
Operational support (to Agencies)	1,797,400	100,000	1,897,400
Sanitation	256,600	0	256,600
Shelter/other infrastructure	228,400	80,000	308,400
Passport/Logistics	2,324,200	800,000	3,124,200
Water (non Agricultural)	373,900	0	373,900
Total operation	13,671,782	1,248,000	14,919,782
Programme support	2,690,630	0	2,690,630
Total	**16,362,412**	**1,248,000**	**17,610,412.**

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION /RECOMMENDATION

The essence of every research work is to proffer solutions or make recommendations on how to solve the problems identified during investigation. Having carefully examined and assessed the response of the UNHCR to the Liberian refugee crisis, this work makes a number of recommendations but before then, a summary of the entire work.

This research set out to investigate the UNHCR response to the Liberian refugee crisis. The central objective was to examine how the UNHCR responded in managing the refugee situation that erupted in Liberia, following the civil war. Being an area where a number of related works had been done on, this work reviewed literature on the concept of refugee and the Liberian civil war. The reviewed literature revealed that the concept of refugees has been given various interpretations, but that the meaning given to it by the 1951 UN convention provides the basis upon which the UNHCR acts. It also revealed that the Liberian civil war was a product of the colonial make up of the country.

The work also traced the background that led to the establishment of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. As revealed, the UNHCR started as an individual charity organization to carter for refugees. This charity initiative was later considered as a necessary

concept and so the UN established the UNHCR. Its establishment follows the increase in cases of refugees across the world. Statistics of refugees across the world were also presented to buttress the point.

Having given the background of the UNCHR, the study narrowed down to the UNHCR response to the Liberian crisis. In other words, how the Liberian refugee crisis was managed by the UNHCR. It was revealed that the agency played tremendous roles in resettlement, reintegration and realignment.

Recommendation will now be proffered on how to better manage refugee crisis around the world as well as how to guide against outbreak of complex emergencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended in this study that

- International, regional and sub-regional Organizations, States, as well as individuals should show more commitment towards tackling the major causes of war in the world.
- There is need for more refugee oriented Agencies and Humanitarian Organizations to assist the UNHCR in the management of refugees.
- The UNCHR should pursue more vigorously, resettlement, reintegration and realignment programmes.

- The UN should allocate more funds to the UNHCR to better carry out the task off refugee management
- The UNHCR should intensify efforts to ensure the security and safety of refugees. The reported cases of attacks in refugee camps, rapes should be prevented.
- The UNHCR should give welfare of refugees more priority.
- Refugee host communities should be enlightened to accommodate refugees in their communities.
- The UNHCR should ensure that social amenities such as water, electricity are provided in refugee camps.

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