GENDER AND GOVERNANCE OF THE REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEE REFUGEE WOMEN IN LIBERIA

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ABSTRACT

Studies indicated that women and men experience conflict, displacement and return differently. In post-war contexts, gender aspects of returnee reintegration have however not been adequately addressed by researchers and policy makers. This study, therefore, examined the gender aspects of the governance of reintegration of returnee refugee Liberian women. It identified the challenges and factors affecting reintegration.

Qualitative methods of data collection were employed. One hundred in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with men and women purposively selected from five of Liberia's fifteen administrative counties, comprising both rural and semi-urban areas. Participants included stakeholders in the governance of returnee refugee reintegration such as government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor agencies and returnee refugees. The IDIs were supplemented with six focus group discussions with returnee women and men, and documentary review. Reliability and validity were achieved by triangulation, inter-observer reliability and respondent validation. The data collected were subjected to content analysis.

The governance of the reintegration of returnee refugees involved a combination of governmental agencies and NGOs with severe problems of coordination. The Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission and the Ministry of Gender and Development were not able to provide the enabling condition for returnee safety and dignity. These agencies were very weak in coordinating the activities of NGOs or mobilizing funds as they suffered from fund shortages and skill capacity deficits. Returnee refugees experienced great economic hardships, particularly with respect to access to livelihood and basic amenities such as water, healthcare and education. Consequently, there were constant backflows. Saddled with domestic responsibilities, and challenged by stayee resentments, sexual exploitation, molestation of their children and spousal abandonment, women lacked time and requisite skills to search for and secure jobs. Most of the women were unable to provide documentation to back up claims of ownership of property and were therefore disadvantaged in the midst of widespread tension over land ownership. Women returnee refugees that enjoyed extended family support had greater sense of security and safety than those without such support. Organisations such as the Women of Liberia Peace Network and the Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment mobilized women to participate in national elections and got them involved in various community and economic empowerment projects. Other issues that affected the reintegration process included limited knowledge of the security and legal system, poor implementation of the changes made in the inheritance and rape laws, the top-down approach supported by donors which limited the opportunities available to women, and the non-use of returnee skills transfer.

The reintegration of returnee refugee women in Liberia was gender biased, determined by the differential effects of the cultural and social contexts on women and men. Although efforts have been made to empower women, the social division of labour and the limited opportunities for women advancement threaten the success, balance and sustainability of reintegration. It is recommended that government and donor agencies involve returnee women in reintegration policy formulation, and promote synergy between organisations working for short-term reintegration, and those working for long-term development in Liberia.

Key words: Reintegration, Returnee, Refugees, Gender, Governance, Liberia
Word count: 497

DEDICATION

To the women of Liberia
Who prayed the devil back to hell
And continue in Courage to brave adversity –
To you, my inspiration

To the people of Liberia:
Without whom this work would have been a groping in the dark,
Without whose friendship I would have nothing and be nowhere.
For giving me this gift of knowledge,
From which indeed we may seek Truth –
That ever-elusive knowing;
That ever-elusive being;
That ever-knowing Being:
To you, my inspiration

And to the God of heaven and earth:
I return this gift back to You, O God
For I expected nothing
But you gave me everything –
Desire, Courage, Hope, Resilience, Comfort, Understanding, Companionship,
And Your Word.
You have been before me, and in me and behind be and all around me and
By the almighty power of Your Word
You have brought me through.
I return this gift back to You, O God
For I expected nothing,
And I find I need nothing even now:
So long as You tarry with me
For I have many more mountains to scale
With You –
My inspiration

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"We should always have three friends in our lives – one who walks ahead who we look up to and follow; one who walks beside us, who is with us every step of our journey; and then, one who we reach back for and bring along after we've cleared the way." – Michelle Obama

The journey through a PhD program is one of the most memorable, arduous, and yet courageous that many of us would have to go on in life here below; it is later that one realizes that everything about it is training for even more difficult tasks ahead. It has been my experience that the journey could be joyful, even if not necessarily easier, because of the various helpers God sends to us along the way. The difference is not in any lessening of expectations or any avoidance of burden, but rather in the attitude that one chooses, or in the ambiance left in the wake of friends and various others. At the most discouraging times, sometimes all that is needed is that hand tugging you forward, that arm linked side-by-side with yours or that hand reaching for you from behind. It has been my extreme privilege to have gotten all this encouragement and support along the way, and I wish to dedicate the next many pages to the persons to whom this tribute is due. Apparently, this is the only section of the thesis that need not be bound by academic tradition, and I intend to take full advantage of that fact.

May I begin by appreciating the God of heaven and earth, without whom I am naught, and all I have would be merely noise and dross. It has become traditional to thank God first in endeavours such as this, but there is nothing remotely traditional about my relationship with God, or my acknowledgement of Him at the start of this missive. My thanks and love and worship are full-bodied, eternity-lasting, words-defying. You have been more than a Friend, o God, stooping to lift me up, running to hold me, waiting ahead of every challenge, covering my defenceless head, giving me songs in the night, talking to me when I have shut out other voices, keeping me and all mine. You have been more than God to me, indeed, Father, Husband, Brother, Sister, Teacher, Counsellor, Companion, Keeper, Provider, Sustainer, Healer, Lawyer, Advocate, Vindicator, Judge, Comforter – are some of the facets of You that I have experienced first hand in the course of this project. You have proven beyond all reasonable doubt that You are *always* on my side, biased towards me in every instance, fighting all battles for me, and winning every single one on my behalf – and leaving me with extra blessings beyond what I originally needed or asked for. How could anyone say there is no God? Or that He reigns in some distant corner of the universe without concern for finite

man? For me, this PhD does not only present evidence concerning Liberia or women or whatever; it is the ultimate proof for me that God exists, and that He is intimately involved in the very details of men and women's lives, like mine. God forbid that I ever produce scholarship that Paul calls "the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge."

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uncomfortable or unwanted or hungry in your home even when I knew things were not at all easy for your family. You *totally* surrounded me with love, and that cushioned every other experience outside the home. For a time I thought of ways to repay your kindness, but I realized you didn't require it at all. So I say Thank You. Thank You from the inner recesses of my being. Thank You.

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much, but we know they're exactly where God wants them to be: spreading their godly influence in faraway Rwanda, where they now serve as missionaries.

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"Finally, let no man trouble me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. Amen."

Yours truly,

Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso
04 August 2011

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research was carried out by Olajumoke YACOB-HALISO in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

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GLOSSARY

4Rs	Relief, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction
AAWORD	Association of African Women for Research and Development
ACF	Action Fund
ACCORD	Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
ACS	American Colonisation Society
ADA	Africa Development Alternatives
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CEPs	Community Empowerment Projects
CFs	Community Facilitators
CIVPOL	Civil Police
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DAWN	Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era
DDCs	District Development Committees
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoL	Government of Liberia
GTZ	*Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit*
HCR	Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (1921)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IGCR	Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees
IGNU	Interim Government of National Unity
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia

IPs	Implementing Partners
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Network
IRO	International Relief Organisation
LACE	Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment
LRRRC	Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Development
MoGD	Ministry of Gender and Development (Liberia)
MOJA	Movement for Justice in Africa
NGOs	Non- Governmental Organisations
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRAG	National Patriotic Reconstruction Government (Taylor)
PAL	Progressive Alliance of Liberia
PMCs	Project Management Committees
PRC	People's Redemption Council
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (Johnson faction)
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (Kromah faction)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

UNRRA   United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

UNRWA   United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near
               East

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

VODWOPEDE Voinjama District Women Organisation for Peace and Development

WAWFF   Women Associated With Fighting Forces

WOLPNET   Women of Liberia Peace Network

YMCA   Young Men Christian Association

ZOA   ZOA Refugee Care

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Since the end of the First World War when the dissolution of multiethnic empires uprooted millions and rendered many homeless, the challenge of forced displacement of persons has been of central significance to the international community. This is due to the heightened magnitude the problem assumed in this period, exacerbated over the decades by a mix of personal, communal, international, and social and political factors.

Specifically, **refugees** are persons fleeing their country of origin because of perceived or real threats to their life, fear of persecution, human rights violation or situations of armed conflict, crossing an internationally recognized border to seek refuge and protection in a country other than their own. Some other persons flee their homes but do not leave the country or cross any internationally recognized state border, instead becoming 'refugees' in their own country – internally displaced persons (IDPs). Others leave their homes seeking a better education for their children, better employment and improved economic conditions, or life nearer their family or friends.

However, what distinguishes refugees from other international migrants is the speed with which the decision to depart is made, as well as the coercion and fear involved, factors that have implications for the quality of life after return to the country of origin. By 2006, an estimated 8.4 million refugees existed worldwide, with up to one third (33%) resident on the African continent (UNHCR 2006).

In Africa, the problem of refugees first emerged as a direct result of violent struggles for independence from colonial rule. However other refugee-producing factors thereafter emerged, and today, a whole complex of factors working in a matrix can be identified as resulting in Africa's refugee flows. Afolayan (2003, p. 68) classifies these refugee producing factors into five major categories: Colonialism and violent decolonization; ethnic and other types of communal conflicts; repressive regimes and severe human rights violations; political rebellion and threats to governments; and profound economic depression. It seems then that refugees are a symbol of the political, social and economic crises which afflict many societies in Africa (OAU/ UNHCR 1994). Unfortunately also, it is in Africa that the "tradition of hospitality" towards refugees has been increasingly eroded over the decades since independence, leading to a decline in protection standards on the continent (Crisp 2000).

At the heart of the responsibility that the international community bears towards refugees is the concept of *protection*. National protection can be said to exist as long as the state is able and willing to ensure the security of its citizens, as long as those citizens recognize the legitimacy of the state, and as long as different groups within society acknowledge the need for them to reconcile their differences by peaceful means (UNHCR 1998, p. 8). International protection is offered to refugees because they have good reason to fear that their own governments cannot or will not provide the safety they need from abuse of their basic rights.

Protection involves not just the provision of legal and physical protection and humanitarian assistance, but also a commitment to search for *durable* (or permanent) solutions to the refugee problem (UNHCR 1993).The classic solutions favoured by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order of preference are: voluntary repatriation (to the country of origin), local integration (in the country of asylum) and resettlement in a third country.

Refugee statistics worldwide today indicate widespread *repatriation*, that is, return of refugees to their country of origin, as well as a sharp drop in refugee numbers. Between 2005 and 2006, the number of refugees worldwide dropped from 9.7 million to 8.4 million, a 13% reduction in only one year and also the lowest total since 1980, largely as a result of more than 6 million refugees (two-thirds of them Afghans) returning home over the past four years. Prior to this, there was already evidence of changing numbers as in two consecutive years – 2002, 2003 refugee numbers significantly decreased (IRIN 2005), and over a four year period (2001-2004) the global refugee population dropped by 24%. This amazing decrease, says the refugee agency UNHCR, was due to refugees accessing durable solutions especially voluntary repatriation. In addition to the continuing return of Afghans, 2005 saw other major repatriations to Liberia, Burundi, Iraq and Angola (all of which welcomed back more than 50,000 returnees during the course of the year). Between 2003 and 2006, over 6 million refugees repatriated worldwide, with 4.6 million of them Afghan refugees (UNHCR, 2005a; UNHCR 2006). In 2004, the West African sub region recorded the second largest reduction in numbers of the refugee population, with Liberians alone accounting for the repatriation of some 57000 refugees, and females constituting about half of this number (UNHCR, 2005a).

By June 2007, more than 160,000 Liberian refugees had returned home from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria (UNHCR 2008).[1]

However, in the so- called 'new era of return' (UNOCHA/ IRIN 2005) it cannot be taken for granted that the protection concerns of refugee women will automatically fizzle out given the tendency towards gender blindness in theory, policy and practice; and especially given the protracted nature of the conflict that has ravaged the West African country of Liberia.

In spite of its remarkable history of being a settlement of returned freed slaves from the Americas, and its history of almost 133 years of relative calm after independence in 1847, Liberia became enmeshed in a bloody and protracted civil war that seriously retarded any progress the country might have gained in the long years since it was founded. Fundamental dislocations in Liberian society led to social unrest and the coup of April 12, 1980 that ushered in the government of Samuel Doe which created and perpetuated ethnic divisions and eventually turned the country into a territory contested by numerous warlords intent on eliminating their respective opponents.

At the height of the 14 year civil war (1989-2003) 700,000 Liberians fled to neighbouring countries in a single year (Hyman, 2003:30). It is estimated that, in the course of the war, three-quarters of the 3 million strong population became either refugees or internally displaced. The war was characterized by gross human rights abuses and a total disregard for the laws of war as violence and brutality was suffered mainly by the civilian population (mostly women and children). An estimated 270, 000 Liberians died in the course of the war, representing approximately 10 percent of the population (Government of Liberia 2008). Eventually, a tentative peace was brokered in 2003 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

In the aftermath of the peace deal, however, gender differences in society continued to exert decided influence on the relative position of individuals, in this case returnee refugees. In the post conflict period, we can identify a plethora of women- specific protection issues as women experience gender specific forms of violence and discrimination in addition to general conditions in a post conflict society. Women return to war-ravaged communities

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[1] Noteworthy here is the fact that the sources of the numbers and estimates and statistics available to the researcher are basically four: the official government estimates, UNHCR estimates, NGO and other advocacy organizations estimates, and the summations and deductions and rationalizations of independent commentators and researchers. The politics of arriving at these various estimates is influenced to the largest degree by the mandate of an organization, its definition of refugees, ideological peculiarities, donor considerations, and very often, political expediency.

lacking in the most basic infrastructure and must endeavour to rebuild their lives under extreme conditions of poverty. Where return is spontaneous and unassisted, women and children face the risk of physical attacks and sexual abuse. On return, self-reliance could remain elusive even for years after repatriation. Widows, elderly women and female heads of household may be unable to claim back land and other property that once belonged either to their husbands or to family, thus exposing them to the uncertainties of a lack of livelihood and probably leaving them at the mercies of in-laws, tradition and other male-dominated structures of society.

The absence of schools, clinics, sanitary conditions, potable water and other infrastructure destroyed during the war is usually felt more keenly by women and their children. In the immediate post- conflict period, most of the protection and assistance issues facing refugee women such as access to food, insecurity of lives, legal documentation and equal access to services and other assistance, continue to persist. In actual fact, returnee women face situations at home that are potentially more devastating and significantly poorer than condition in their country of asylum. In all cases, the challenges of adapting to 'life at home' after the 'advantages' of international assistance in refugee camps can be very daunting.

Social reintegration of refugee women who just returned home also poses a major challenge. Those who never left may display hostility and even jealousy especially if returnees continue to receive humanitarian assistance, where resources are very scarce (Lambo 2003), or where refugees return with urbane or sophisticated skills. It is also a fact that during displacement traditional gender roles are often reversed, making the woman the primary provider for the family. However, in the early transition and return stage, studies have shown that domestic violence becomes more prevalent as both women and men attempt to assume their perceived ideal role and authority in the family.

And for some women, fear may still be a continuous reality as they may still meet some of the people they fled from still living in the same communities (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002). Already, Sierra Leonean women have reported fears of returning on the basis of persecution for not participating in female genital cutting/mutilation [FGC/FGM] (Refugees International, 2004). Gender-based persecution of this kind is usually not taken into account in reintegration programs.

Demographic and generational cleavages that might have developed during the war also have decided impact on reintegration (Martin, 1992; Drumtra, 1999). In Liberia for example, the

long period of conflict in which large numbers of child soldiers were used has eroded traditional respect for adult authority, a situation which creates tensions in the family and community and contributes to the violence and intolerance that affect women's lives.

All the above may be further compounded by the absence or weakness of governance processes and institutions which in the reintegration period can lead to impunity for violations of human rights, for sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and related obnoxious offences. Importantly however, women in various post conflict societies have found ways to contribute to peace building by organizing to tackle the violence and impoverishment they face in the early transition period, indicating that they are not just passively accepting of socially constructed gender roles and expectations.

In the specific Liberian case, we may make recourse to the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Accra CPA) that was reached in August 2003 to locate some of the issues that bear investigation. In its Article XXX, Sections 1 (a) to (c) the accord specifies that:

> 1a. The NTGL, with the assistance of **the International Community**, shall design and implement a plan for the **voluntary return and reintegration** of Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons, including non-combatants, **in accordance with international conventions**, norms and practices.
>
> b. Refugees or internally displaced persons, desirous of returning to their original Counties or permanent residences, **shall be assisted** to do so.
>
> c. The Parties commit themselves to **peaceful co-existence** amongst returnees and non-returnees in all Counties (Accra CPA 2003, pp 23- 24, emphasis mine).

The highlighted phrases above show the specific areas of research that are needed in terms of the expressed needs in the early stages of the transition to democracy. The CPA shows the importance of international and local engagements (and thus the possibility of a multiplicity of governance frameworks); the expectations of voluntariness and of return; the expectations of reintegration proceeding with return; recognition of the need for assistance for returning populations; and the social aspects of the experience for individual returnees. These issues are some of the directions of the present research.

The UNHCR has observed that generally speaking there is relatively little information available regarding international protection concerns specific to refugee women in relation to durable solutions (UNHCR 1990), as well as a dearth of political science research addressing the above linkages. A survey of current literature reveals the same lacuna. Therefore, it has

become pertinent to carry out research of this crucial nature- and especially in the wake of mass repatriations to Liberia begun in 2003, accelerated in the aftermath of the November 2005 elections and which lasted till 2009 with trickles still returning to date.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Empirical evidence has demonstrated that women and men experience conflict, displacement and return differently (Oyinloye, 2004; Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002; Sorenson, 1998; Byrne, 1996). However, it cannot be taken for granted in the post war period that gendered aspects of reintegration would be given recognition and be adequately addressed and there is usually a tendency towards gender- blindness in theory, policy and practice relating to the analysis of post war situations. In places like Liberia in which civil conflict has been prolonged, the need for addressing the issue is often overshadowed by the desire to attend first to the entrenchment of the new political order. Unfortunately, in the immediate post- war and transition era returnees continue to experience social-psychological, economic, legal and political challenges that make reintegration difficult- a situation that is compounded by the absence or weakness of governance institutions. With women and their children constituting an overwhelming seventy five percent of all returnees, their reintegration provides important insight into the wellbeing of the newly instituted civil- democratic regime in Liberia. As has been noted by Egwu (2003) and Mama (1995), women's positions within the governance frameworks of society provide a significant indicator of the level of democracy in a society. In light of this, this research examined the various gender and governance aspects of refugee reintegration in Liberia, and the possible implications for sustainable reintegration of returnee women.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this research was to examine gender and governance aspects of returnee refugee reintegration in Liberia and the possible implications for sustainable reintegration in that country.

Specifically, this research aimed to:

1. Identify the political, legal, social and economic challenges to the reintegration of Liberian returnee women, as well as the efforts being made by various parties to address these issues.

2. Investigate how factors such as age, reason for and length of displacement, education/skills training, area of return, family support and government policy conflate with gender to determine the progress and sustainability of reintegration.

3. Examine returnee women's knowledge of, access to, and participation in governance processes essential to guaranteeing their successful reintegration into post conflict Liberian society.

4. Determine the governance issues arising from an exploration of questions 1 to 3 above.

5. Determine perceptions of the success of the reintegration of Liberian returnee refugee women.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the existing economic, social-psychological, political and legal reintegration challenges faced by Liberian returnee refugee women?

2. Do factors such as age, length of displacement, area of return, skills training/ education, family support and government policy affect the reintegration of Liberian returnee refugee women?

3. What efforts are being made by government, local and international agencies, communities and refugees themselves to address the above challenges?

4. Do returnee refugee women know and participate in governance processes that would address the problems of reintegration?

5. What are some of the governance issues arising from questions 1 to 3 above?

6. To what extent is the task of reintegration of returnee refugees being successfully accomplished in post war Liberia?

1.5 Justification of Study

Although located within the already rich discourse on the international protection of refugees, this research makes significant contributions to the sparse research on refugee women in West Africa specifically, and to research on the impact of the application of durable solutions on refugee women generally.

It has been rightly observed also that, historically, there is a marked lack of gender disaggregated statistics and evaluations for post conflict situations (The Women's National Commission-UK, 2005; Sorenson, 1998), a lacuna that needs to be addressed by academics, activists and policy makers alike. The contribution of this work in this regard cannot therefore be overemphasized.

Importantly also, this research is timely because it addresses the present and ongoing reality of refugee life in West Africa, which today is basically all focused on the repatriation of refugees back home. With women constituting an overwhelming proportion of returnees, the subject of this research becomes critical not only to the very survival of entire communities, but also to the sustenance of the peace process in Liberia. As noted in the literature, "there can be no hope of normalcy until the vast majority of those displaced are able to reintegrate themselves into their societies" (Holtzman, 1995:15). The return and successful reintegration of refugees can contribute not only to building confidence in the peace process in post conflict societies, but also to legitimizing the new political order instituted by elections held (UNHCR, 1998:160-163).

Furthermore, little is known about how reintegration programs and governance issues that do or do not address gender considerations may contribute to or hinder peaceful transitions and post conflict reconstruction of war affected societies (cf Mazurana and Carlson, 2004:6). Therefore, this study will go a long way towards addressing this theoretical gap. Besides, the attempt to link governance with successful reintegration provides a fresh approach that teases out for analysis the essential elements of reintegration that play central roles in the consolidation of peace building efforts in post conflict societies.

 The decision to study Liberian women in particular is informed by the fact that this category of persons has experienced the range of refugee situations characteristic of others in Africa, such as protracted conflict, cyclical displacement and return, return to severely war ravaged communities, as well as other experiences. This research could therefore provide in-depth analysis that will contribute to a deeper general understanding.

It is intended that this research will not only successfully describe and explain emerging realities of post conflict repatriation and reintegration of refugees, but will also provoke further discourse and research among scholars and thereby contribute to both theory and practice.

1.6 Scope of Study

While this research drew on existing research carried out on returnees in other time periods and with respect to other specific parts of Africa and the world, it was mainly concerned with the Liberian case in the aftermath of the peace deal that was made in 2003 to end the 14-year long civil war. The research focused on four specific aspects of returnee reintegration, namely, the political, the legal, the social and the economic (see UNHCR, 2004). The *political* aspect entails stability of government, participation in political processes, gender equity in all aspects of political life, protection from persecution, and full enjoyment of rights. The *legal* entails access to legal processes and legal support/documentation for ownership of property, land and housing. The *social* aspect deals with access to social services, physical and psychological security, absence of discrimination, and so on. The *economic* relates to access to productive resources such as land, agricultural inputs and livestock, credit facilities, and so on. In terms of geographical scope, this study covers four of Liberia's fifteen administrative counties namely, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Montserrado and Nimba.

1.7 Methods and Data Sources

This research was exploratory as it sought to investigate little known aspects of returnee refugee reintegration, and to provide insight to research that is possible on a larger scale. Qualitative research methods were used. Three specific instruments were utilized: interviews (semi structured and unstructured), focus group discussions (FGDs) and (participant and non-participant) observation.

Two main sources of data were useful for pursuing the research objectives- primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data consisted of returnee refugees, female and male, family heads, community leaders, government agencies and officials, staff of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or community based organisations (CBOs); staff of international non-governmental organisations working with returnees e.g. UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee, Adventist Development and Relief Services, et.c; various other members of civil society, and other persons or agencies with knowledge of, or responsibility for various aspects of returnee reintegration.

Secondary sources of data included books, relevant journals, media reports, government documents, unofficial documents such as personal correspondence, available statistics from government and non-government sources, research reports of other researchers, technical reports of concerned agencies, the official websites of agencies such as the UNHCR, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, International Rescue Committee, Refugees International, et.c., and the internet generally.

1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Refugee: Refugees are persons fleeing their country of origin because of perceived or real threats to their life, fear of persecution, human rights violation or situations of armed conflict, crossing an internationally recognized border to seek refuge and protection in a country other than their own. A refugee is different from a migrant in terms of the reasons for flight, and speed and fear accompanying such flight. A refugee is also distinguished from an internally displaced person (IDP) as the IDP does not cross an internationally recognised border, according to the requirements for granting refugee status in international law.

Returnee: In the context of this research, a returnee is a former refugee who has returned to the country of origin, either because the reasons for going into exile no longer subsist, or because he/she had no other alternative but to return. A returnee in this sense is different from a person who migrated for reasons other than fear of persecution and armed conflict (such as members of the African diaspora in Europe and the US), and then chose to return to the country of origin after a period of sojourn abroad.

Reintegration: Simply put, reintegration refers to the process by which former refugees become once again a part of the community and country of origin through their access to basic infrastructure, basic human rights and acceptance legally, socially and symbolically. In this study, reintegration does not refer to the processes by which former ex-combatants and other traumatized groups receive rehabilitation and services; reintegration is used exclusively to refer to the process as experienced by former exiles.

Gender: This is a term used to sum up the relations and interconnections between the male and female sexes in society and how the identities, roles and responsibilities of males and females are constantly being constructed in society. Gender here refers to the notions of femininity and masculinity accepted in a given society, and how this affects individual members of the sexes.

Governance: Is the means by which governments, civil society and other groups in society interact so as to make the important decisions that give direction to society. Governance in this study is used in the broader sense to go beyond what government does, to identify the roles of various agencies and groups and collectivities in steering societal decision making.

1.9 Overview of Chapters

This research is reported in six chapters: **Chapter One** provides a general *introduction*. **Chapter Two** contains *a review of the literature* on repatriation as durable solution to the refugee problem, governance and post conflict reintegration, gender and conflict, the nexus between these variables and a review of the experience in Africa and elsewhere. This chapter also reviews existing theoretical approaches from the literature that are pertinent to the study and states the specific *theoretical framework* relevant for making sense of this research**. Chapter Three** describes in detail the *methodology* for gathering data and also highlights the limitations encountered in executing the research. **Chapter Four** *presents and analyzes data* collected in a systematic and meaningful manner while **Chapter Five** *discusses and interprets the data* in relation to the literature and in answering the research questions. **Chapter Six** *concludes* the study and describes the implications of the findings of the research for theory, policy and practice.

1.10 A Brief Political History of Liberia

It is pertinent to pause to survey the historical locations that dictated the fortunes of Liberia, the country we investigate in this research. According to Mary Moran (2006, p. 53), few other nations have been so relentlessly represented as the victim of their own "peculiar" history as Liberia. Whereas most African states are portrayed as coming into existence at the point of colonisation generally in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Liberia is noted as being "founded" by "freed slaves from the United States of America" as far back as 1822. There are a couple of false images evident in this picture often portrayed by virtually every commentator on Liberian history. In the first place, as with the rest of Africa, it is assumed that Liberia had no history worthy of recognition before the arrival of the American ex-slaves under the repatriation programme sponsored by the American Colonisation Society. On the contrary, it is possible to trace the broad history of the territory that came to be called Liberia and its various tribes and clans some centuries back, albeit mostly by oral tradition (Ellis 2007, p. 37). Secondly, Mary Moran (2006) points out that whereas Liberia is branded with the stigma of slave origins as if the American patrons of the ex-slaves who founded

Liberia were the beneficiaries of the good will of American society for newly freed slaves, the reality was that the very existence of free people of colour in the US at that time were perceived as a threat by their former slave-owners. In the words of James Youboty (2004, p. 9), "it all started out of fear."

With respect to the history of Liberia before the arrival of the ex-slaves, Joseph Guannu (2000, p. 1) informs us that the area now called Liberia was known as the "Grain or Pepper Coast"[2] and inhabited by people now described as belonging to sixteen [official] ethnic groups: Bandi, Bassoh (Bassa), Belle, Dan (Gio), Dei, Glebo (Grebo), Gola, Kissi, Kpelle, Krahn, Krao (Kru), Lorma, Mandingo, Mahn (Mano), Mende and Vey (Vai). Ellis (2007) attempts to deconstruct the existence of ethnic groups as such in Liberia before the advent of administrative structures that labelled and categorized and froze what were previously fluid concepts and identities that existed in the "stateless" indigenous Liberian communities[3]. Analysing the origins of the Krahn and the Mandingo as an ethnic group in Liberia, Ellis concludes that "modern ethnicity has been formed largely in response to political and administrative incentives and opportunities even when this was no part of the central government's intention" (p. 36). These created identities, and the oral traditions of origin were to become vital factors in the destruction of Liberia that began in the 1980s.

With regard to the establishment of the Liberian state by repatriated black slaves from the US, the stated goals of the American Colonisation Society (ACS) at the time were:

- To rescue the free coloured people of the United States from their political and social disadvantages
- To place them in a country where they may enjoy the benefits of free government, with all the blessings which it brings in its train
- To spread civilisation, sound morals, and true religion throughout the continent of Africa
- To arrest and destroy the slave trade
- To afford slave owners who wished or were willing, to liberate their slaves, an asylum for their reception (Vermont Colonisation society, 1858 in Edward Wonkeryor 2002, pp 28 - 29).

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[2] Or the "Grain Coast of West Africa"(Youboty 2004, p. 10)

[3] Ellis (2007, p. 33) states that: "As in many other parts of Africa, the units of political ethnicity which are so generally used in national politics…do not describe the modern descendants of ancient micro-nations but are recent formations, whose history is inseparable from the politics of the modern state. Generally speaking, only when people migrate to Monrovia and congregate in neighbourhoods based on their region of origin do some of the local differences between lineages erode, and the 'tribal' labels become more important."

Interpreted, this meant amongst other things: to rid America of a certain population (freed slaves) that was bent on conspiracy and insurrection; to rid the United States of a supposedly inferior racial group, i. e. black Africans; and to supposedly give "uncivilised" Africa the "blessings" of civilisation and religion (Guannu 2000, p. 2).

Thus, the ACS, a philanthropic organisation in the US that boasted many prominent Americans undertook to resettle about 23,000 blacks between 1822 and 1867, of which approximately 12,000 were freed slaves, and others blacks who decided for repatriation (Jus Liebenow 1987, p. 19 in Lester Hyman 2003, p. 4). The territory was initially structured as a group of independent colonies, becoming first a commonwealth in 1838, and then a republic in 1847, the first independent African country to be ruled by black Africans. The new nation was recognised by several European countries including Britain (1848) and France (1852), but the United States hesitated for another fifteen years (until 1862) to extend diplomatic recognition. This was due to its own internal struggles, because it needed to "remove the principal objectors to the presence of a Black envoy in Washington, D. C." (Liebenow 1987, p. 17; Hyman 2003, p. 7). This hesitation by the United States was to mark its subsequent foreign policy towards Liberia, especially in the years after the end of the Cold War when Liberia was no longer of strategic interest to the US.

These settlers proceeded to stamp the new nation with their identity as former Americans. They called the new nation, Liberia, from *liberty*, i.e. to be free and chose as their motto "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here"[4]. They named the capital "Monrovia", after then President James Monroe; their constitution was written at Harvard Law School; their Capitol building was built as a replica of the US Capitol; their flag consisted a single star on eleven stripes representing the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and adopted the red, white and blue colours of the American flag (Hyman 2003, p. 4). Indeed the seeds were already being sown for the eventual inferno that would engulf the country in the late twentieth century.

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[4] The total disregard for the existence or the experience of the African indigenous population is most evident here. The motto and name of the new republic were completely descriptive of settler experience, because after all, the natives had been free before, and the love of liberty was not their own social aspiration until the colonizing settlers made it so. Neither were they "brought" from somewhere as their American counterparts had been.

The settlers that came to be called Americo-Liberians or "Congo"[5] people proceeded to glorify their American heritage, and demean the indigenous people. There was a fundamental clash of cultures and values that only intensified over time as the settled slaves assumed the manner of their former slave-masters and undertook to mistreat the indigenous people, using them primarily as servants and closing off access to political power and social opportunities for them. This is the widely reported version of Liberian history before the 1970s. An alternative history is also recognised in the literature as several sources argue that there was not that sharp or neat division between the settler and the native[6], or between the city-dwelling urban Americo-Liberians and the rural/ forest dwelling indigenous people (see Moran 2006 and Hyman 2003). Hyman (p. 5), for example argues that the settlers as part of their "civilising" mission intermarried with the indigenous people, and brought them into the body politic through participation in the republican government.

However it was for matters of expediency that indirect-rule-type government was imposed on the hinterland between 1904 and 1912, primarily to demonstrate effective occupation of territory in light of threats of annexation of land by Britain and France, the major colonial powers engaged in the scramble for West Africa at this time. Ultimately, "the British forced concessions of Liberian territory to Sierra Leone in 1883 and 1903." The French also "forced Liberia to cede part of its territory to Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) in 1892 with the signing of a treaty" (Hyman 2003, pp 8-9). We see therefore that it was inevitable that Liberia in the future would have tensions with its neighbours, with devastating consequences for the entire region even till this very day. As for succeeding governments of Liberia in the early twentieth century, they were all "characteristically…totalitarian, corrupt and brutal towards all of Liberia's other ethnic groups" (Hyman, p. 13).

By the time of the military coup of Samuel Kanyon Doe in 1980, the nation was in dire economic straits, and experiencing deep structural inequalities that led to the implosion of the next twenty-some years. The "reform minded" President Tolbert who took over from the extremely tyrannical W. V. S. Tubman in 1971, had an almost-revolution on his hands. Student and intellectual opposition groups of young people demanded top government

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[5] The term "Congo" was initially used to refer to those slaves from all over Africa whose ships were intercepted anti-slavery British ships during the Atlantic crossing and returned to the African continent, to Liberia specifically. Today it is used generically to refer to any of the descendants of ex-slaves, American or African. See Ellis (2007, p. 41) and Hyman (2003, p. 12).
[6] The use of the terms "settler" and "native" and "tribe" and other such labels in this section must be not be seen as an endorsement of the labels, but as merely a matter of expediency as the literature consistently uses these labels, and Liberians themselves use these terms.

positions after receiving elite education. The Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) headed by Baccus Mathews, and the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) with Amos Sawyer as one of its leaders, were the most prominent of these groups.

Unfortunately for Tolbert, "the more concessions he made to those who called for political reform, the more estranged from the conservatives in his own party" (Ellis 2007, p. 50). He has thus been called a victim of his own creation, and likened to Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, and his *perestroika* (Youboty 2004, p. 30). Tolbert's withdrawal of rapport with the US government did nothing to help his government. When he raised the price of rice to discourage expensive importation of the Liberian staple: that was the straw that broke the camel's back. The so-called rice riots erupted in Monrovia on 14 April 1979, greatly weakening the already-feeble government, and giving opportunity for the opposition to gain popular support and mobilize for change. The coup d' etat by seventeen non-commissioned officers, all from the indigenous tribes, led by Thomas Quiwonkpa on the night of 12 April 1980 was timed to pre-empt any political gesturing planned by Tolbert to mark the one year anniversary of the rice riots.

Thus began the decades of instability and violence of a scale and magnitude never before seen by the Liberian people. Perhaps they would not have rejoiced so fervently after the coup that projected Samuel Doe to the chairmanship of the People's Redemption Council (PRC) if they foresaw the gorge into which the 133 year old nation was falling into. Instead the coup was hailed as a "revolution" (Youboty 2004, p. 26), and the public took to the streets in jubilation. The virtually illiterate 28-year old Samuel Doe, an ethnic Krahn from Grand Gedeh county became the chairman of the political arm of the government, the PRC, and Quiwonkpa, a Gio from Nimba county, opted to remain as head of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). Members of the opposition to the previous government were quickly co-opted into the new government to run state machinery in light of the obvious ignorance of the ruling junta. One of the civilians in the newly formed government was a man named Charles Taylor, a close in-law of Quiwonkpa, who became the government's officer in charge of procurements.

Very soon however, seeking to consolidate his position as ruler in Liberia, Samuel Doe rigged elections that saw him returned as a civilian president in 1985, and proceeded on a campaign of calumny that saw frequent summary and very public execution of perceived opponents. Unfortunately, this soon turned into a form of ethnic cleansing particularly after

the failed coup of General Quiwonkpa in 1985, aided by Sierra Leone. Doe's soldiers took it upon themselves to punish the Gio, other tribes like the Grebo who had been marginalised by the regime, and all other persons/ clans/ tribes related to them. It was at this point that many educated and prominent Liberians, including Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, fled for their lives due to the fear of being falsely accused of treason. Charles Taylor also fled the country to the United States where he was jailed and being processed for extradition to Liberia to answer charges of corruption in government, when he broke jail and fled.

Needless to say, Nimba people saw Doe as an enemy. Little wonder that when Charles Taylor resurfaced with his small band of fighters with help from Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, and Sierra Leonean rebels, all patent enemies of Samuel Doe, he chose to enter the country through Nimba, via the neighbouring Ivory Coast. To this day, we are told that many Nimba people would not speak ill of Charles Taylor[7]. Apart from the fact that Doe killed their son, Quiwonkpa, he also encouraged ethnic rivalry and bitterness by co-opting the Mandingo, a trading tribe generally seen as non-citizens who migrated from Guinea and cheated their way to prosperity in Nimba. The majority Gio and Mano in the County were severely displeased by this presidential preference and the subsequent elimination of their own prominent sons. The bitterness generated in this period remains to this day, even after the end of civil conflict.

On Christmas Eve, 24 December 1989, Tailor launched an armed insurrection into Liberia. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) approached rapidly from the north western boundary, and by July 2, 1990, was crouched around Monrovia – just five miles from the centre of Monrovia by some accounts – poised to take the city and seize the government from Doe. However several factors, mostly external, denied him this victory. The United States continued to publicly support the government of Samuel Doe; in June the US evacuated its citizens and denied the civilian population any assistance; Nigeria, a powerful regional force with "hegemonic ambitions" (Hyman 2003, p. 33) entered into the fray; and the establishment of an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). This was the year that Liberia became a major refugee-producing country. In 1990 alone, more than 700,000 refugees fled the country whose total population was just 2.5 million. This was partly because the war had become an ethnic war as reports indicate that Taylor's forces at this time targeted the ethnic Krahn and Mandingo in Nimba and everywhere they went, while Doe's Armed

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[7] Conversation with a chartered driver who claimed to have been Charles Taylor's driver back in the days. As a matter of fact, we were en route to Nimba County when this conversation took place, so I took this as a note of caution.

Forces of Liberia (AFL) dominated by his Krahn kinsmen went on a similar rampage against other tribes deemed as supporting the rebels. In short, nobody was safe.

Nigeria's role in the Liberian war has been researched sufficiently by many scholars. Suffice to say here that in the early stages of the war, in April 1990, then-President Ibrahim Babangida sent plane loads of arms and ammunition to aid Samuel Doe. Then she used her influence in ECOWAS to form a military force to intervene in the crisis: the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The ECOMOG force, 3,000-strong, 90% Nigerian, was voted by ECOWAS on 7 August and landed in Monrovia on 24 August 1990. On 27 August 1990, an ECOWAS-sponsored conference hosted the major political parties − excepting the armed combatants − and elected Amos Sawyer to head an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). To her credit, however, Nigeria supervised an endless round of peace negotiations between the various parties that emerged during the war, throughout the duration of the war. It was her credibility as a neutral facilitator that was questioned very early[8].

Suddenly, Taylor's imminent victory was wrested from him, as he could not proceed on Monrovia, and he could not complete the rebellion he had started. To make matters worse, a breakaway faction of his NPFL, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), led by Prince Yourmie Johnson entered into the hostilities and denied him the coup de grace. It was the INPFL that had the unexpected "privilege" of capturing Samuel Doe on 9 September 1990 during the latter's visit to the ECOWAS barracks, and of torturing and killing him, ending that phase of the war.

By the end of 1990, several forces were already parties to the war: Taylor's NPFL with headquarters in Gbarnga, Bong County in the north-central region; then his National Patriotic Reconstruction Government (NPRAG) that governed "Greater Liberia", that is all of Liberia

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[8] There is also some dispute as to the overall contribution of ECOWAS-ECOMOG-Nigeria to the protraction of the war. One source − Hyman 2003 − which is seen as a defender of the Taylor regime (see Ellis 2007, p. xxi), posits that "because of its size and military power, Nigeria influenced ECOWAS and ECOMOG policy formulation and implementation…all factors [that] prolonged the conflict that devastated Liberia" (p. 39). On the contrary, the African Women and Peace Support Group (2004, p. 5) posits that: "Despite…shortcomings and some setbacks, ECOMOG activity undoubtedly provided increased protection and security for large parts of the civilian population, reduced potential levels of violence and arguably was one of the elements that shortened he protracted armed conflict" (See also Republic of Liberia TRC 2009, p. 127). The point remains arguable even to ordinary Liberians. However, my personal experience as I met Liberians at home and abroad, was their appreciation for the aid Nigeria/ECOWAS gave at strategic points during the conflict, her staying for most of the duration of the war when other western actors shied away or deserted (notably the US), Nigeria's hosting them as refugees and granting them free access to education as other nationals up to the tertiary level, Nigeria's sponsorship of several peace conferences, etc, etc. The jury is still out on this one, then.

except the capital from 10 October 1990; which was under the government of the IGNU, and the protection of the ECOMOG forces, and the occupation of the INPFL. And so the war dragged for the next seven years.

In that time, various ethnic-based factions arose to contest the NPFL and one another. In October 1991, the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) was formed by a merger of four other groups and came under the leadership of Alhaji G. V. Kromah, who retained its leadership when another faction broke off from them in 1993. Kromah's faction came to be known as ULIMO-K, made up of the Mandingos predominantly, and the other faction led by a Roosevelt Johnson came to be known as ULIMO-J, made up mostly of Krahn ethnics. Other ethnic-based forces included the Nimba Defence Council, the Movement for the Redemption of Liberian Moslems (read Mandingos), the MRLM, the Liberian Peace Council, LPC (Krahn dominated), the Lofa Defence Force and so on. According to the report of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), "the insurgency quickly degenerated into a 'rebellion without a cause'. At one point, a seven-cornered fight as represented by seven distinct warring factions, engaged in a full-blown fratricidal civil war…" (Republic of Liberia TRC 2009, p. 119).

By 1995, the UNHCR estimated that more than 850,000 Liberians were refugees in the neighbouring countries of Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria, while over one million were internally displaced and accommodated in six displaced persons camps within the country (Africa Women and Peace Support Group 2004, p. 4). Furthermore, the 1989 to 1997 conflict was "marked by 46 political mediation meetings, ceasefire agreements and peace accords…. Over a dozen peace agreements were signed" (ibid, p. 5). Specifically, 17 peace agreements were concluded over the course of the entire conflict, that is, 1989 to 2003 (Republic of Liberia TRC 2009, p. 126). The Liberian conflict which got exported to neighbouring Sierra Leone and Guinea[9], eventually witnessed a respite with the Abuja II[10]

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[9] The three countries – Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea – make up the Mano River Union. Adekanye has referred to Liberia and Sierra Leone as "fatuously twinned", like Rwanda and Burundi, in that their fates like their histories are inextricably linked together.

[10] I remember stopping at a popular restaurant/bar called Abuja II in Ganta, Nimba County to meet up with my research assistant. Out of curiosity, I asked my knowledgeable driver why anyone would name his/her joint Abuja II. He responded as if I ought to know, that Abuja is a symbol of peace for most Liberians because of all the peace conferences either held there or originating from there.

peace agreement that instituted a momentary peace, elections and a Taylor Presidency in July 1997[11].

That "peace"[12] was shattered in 1999 with the incursion of a "new" rebel movement, the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) from Lofa County in the north of the country, led by Sekou Damate Conneh, a Mandingo. This rebel force was allegedly supportd by Guinea, given that the wife of the rebel leader, Aisha Conneh, was a very influential spiritual adviser to Guinean President Lansana Conte. About this same time, it was reported that Charles Taylor had sponsored some Guinean dissidents to attack Guinea from Liberia (Youboty 2004, 361). Guinea's ire would then seem justified. LURD fought from Lofa county for many months, then after pushing back Taylor's AFL set up headquarters in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, just to the west of Monrovia. To make matters worse for Liberian refugees who had sought refuge in Cote d'Ivoire, that country also simultaneously imploded with a coup, disputed elections and a civil war that went full scale in the year 2000. The entire region was up in flames – a fact that was attributed by many commentators to the remote controlling of Libyan leader, Muammar Ghadaffi.

It was no wonder then when in March 2003, a second rebel faction entered the country from the Ivory Coast and occupied Grand Gedeh County in the southeast. This force called itself the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), and was headed by Thomas Nimely-Yaya.

On June 4, 2003, peace talks began in Akosombo, Ghana, attended by all the factions, including Taylor himself and several African Heads of State including Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. Before any discussions could begin however, a "legal bombshell" (Hyman 2003, p. 222) was thrown at the proceedings. The chief prosecutor of the UN-mandated Special Court for Sierra Leone issued a warrant for the arrest of Charles Taylor, indicting him for complicity in crimes committed during Sierra Leone's civil war. Incensed and embarrassed by the inauspicious timing of this development, African heads of

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[11] Most commentators make a point of noting here that Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf contested the presidency in the 1997 elections and came a distant second, though in a field with 13 candidates, that was still remarkable. Additionally, it is recorded that many voted for Taylor out of fear, chanting the slogan: "He kill my ma, he kill my pa, I will vote for him."

[12] In actuality, "peace" only meant that there was for the first time one dominant fighting force: Taylor's NPFL which he used as the national army for his presidency. The literature indicates that in 1997 and 1998 there were sporadic outbursts of violence between Taylor's forces and new factions. Coupled with a repressive political atmosphere, extra-judicial killings, continuous human rights abuses, an army comprising only Taylor's men and excluding others interests, and Taylor's refusal to cooperate with ECOMOG and demobilize tens of thousands of fighters, we may conclude that there was really no peace in this interregnum (1997-1999)

state present and President John Kufuor of Ghana put Taylor on the host's personal plane to take him back to Monrovia.

The talks continued in Akosombo and Accra, however, while in Liberia it was "raining mortar", as reported by CNN (Youboty 2004, p. 370). It was in this period that residents of Monrovia witnessed what they called "World War I, II and III", referring to the LURD's strike and retreat tactics on Monrovia (Republic of Liberia TRC 2009, p. 135). On 17 June, the Accra Ceasefire Agreement was signed by the Government of Liberia (GoL), LURD and MODEL. It took another long two months, on 18 August 2003, for the parties to the conflict to sign the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Accra CPA).

It seems the latter stride was achieved in direct relation to Charles Taylor's decision to step down as president and accept Nigeria's standing offer of asylum. On Monday, 11 August 2003, Charles Taylor got on Nigeria's presidential jet in the company of the Nigerian president Obasanjo, South Africa's Mbeki, and several other dignitaries and was whisked off to Calabar in Nigeria. As Youboty (2004, p. 374) emotively puts it, "Charles MacArthur Ghangay Taylor became a refugee, just like the rest of us…. What goes around, comes around!"

What followed was the restoration of the country to democracy. On 1 October 2003, the UN Security Council approved peacekeeping forces to the tune of 15,000 troops to Liberia, to be called the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). An interim government was set up, chaired by businessman Charles Gyude Bryant, and elections were organised in 2005 that saw the ascendancy of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to the position of Head of State on 16 January 2006, making her the first elected female leader of an African country. Even better, was the opportunity afforded the hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees to return to their country after decades of brutalisation and cyclical displacement. Their experiences in the 'era of return' are the major preoccupations of this research work.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Scholars and practitioners before this time have within their own moulds of thinking and acting attempted to make sense of the phenomena under study, describing and explaining various aspects of returnee refugee reintegration in diverse social and post conflict contexts. This chapter contains a review of the literature on repatriation as durable solution to the refugee problem, governance and post conflict reintegration, gender and conflict, the nexus between these variables and a review of the experience in Africa and elsewhere. This chapter also reviews various existing theoretical approaches pertinent to the study and states the specific theoretical framework relevant for making sense of this research.

2.1 The Governance of the International Refugee Regime

2.1.1 Historical Evolution and Cardinal Features

The granting of refuge to aliens by indigenous communities has been a traditional aspect of human culture everywhere; thus refugees have existed in one form or the other throughout recorded history and the concept of asylum was not unknown in pre-modern times[13]:

> Before the advent of nation states, religious belief as well as a sense of common experience gave birth to concepts such as Christian refuge, Islamic sanctuary and African brotherhood…. However, with the establishment of nation states, national governments took over the asylum responsibility and this, in turn paved the way for international action for the protection of refugees (Ajala, 1998: p 127).

In light of this preliminary observation therefore we must necessarily delimit our exploration of the development of the international refugee regime[14] to that point in history when the current state- centred international system came into existence[15] and began to exercise

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[13] Ajala (1998) further points out that even in the Old Testament book of Numbers, Chapter 35: 9-15 of the Holy Bible, God instructed Moses and the Israelites to designate six cities as "cities of refuge".

[14] A regime, in international relations theory refers to those "principles, norms and decision making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue area" (Krasner, 1982, p 185); or could be defined as "governing arrangements constructed by states to coordinate their expectations and organize aspects of international behaviour in various issue areas. They thus comprise a normative element, state practice, and organizational roles." (Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie, 1986: p 759). International regimes are thus intricately linked with concepts of global governance.

[15] Most international relations scholars agree that the current state-centred international political system came into existence with the institution of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648.

functions that included the granting of asylum to exiles within its borders; as well as to those issues that have contemporary analytic relevance.

Under this state system, the "first true refugees" (Barnett, 2002: p. 1) recognized as such were the French Huguenots, Protestant Christians who fled France from religious persecution under the reign of King Louis XIV in 1685. An estimated 200,000 persons found refuge in Switzerland, Netherlands, Germany, England, Denmark and the United States. It must be noted that although the concept of refugees as a distinct social category began to take form at about this time, they were not for many more years to be considered as a collective international concern. Michael Marrus (1988: pp.3-5) has identified four specific historical factors that produced the social position of refugees in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

1) *The emerging consciousness of national identity, usually traced to the French Revolution*. Before this time, states exhibited a typical laissez- faire attitude towards fugitives that crossed their borders, and extended little or no restrictions or favours to these people; neither did they distinguish between refugees and other immigrants finding their way onto their state's territory (Barnett, 2002: p.2). Infact, up until this time, the term 'refugee' was not recognized in popular usage (Marrus, 1985: p.9). Nonetheless, by the time of the French Revolution in 1789 when the new populist regime attempted to impose its ideals on the citizenry, the French aristocracy ultimately took the flak and became the hunted, propelling them to flee for their lives. This new class of *refugees* (stylistically called *émigrés*) created specific reactions from the governments of the time who were intent on preserving the balance of power in Europe. The governments of Austria, Prussia, Russia and England, as allies at the time, willingly took in the French aristocrats as a means of limiting France's power and quest for hegemony in Europe. Thus, the states that granted the émigrés refuge were taking deliberate action to influence the international system of the time, marking for decades to come the politicization of asylum.

2) *In the age of revolutions, refugees were perceived as the carriers of alien and subversive doctrines*. When the nineteenth century rolled in, so did a wave of nationalist political revolutions that shook Europe and created new refugee dilemmas. While states such as England and Switzerland opened their arms to the political revolutionaries fleeing their own countries, more conservative states- notably the allies referred to as the Concert of Europe- refused them entry or ejected them from their territories whenever possible. By the mid- nineteenth century, the fleeing revolutionaries were being seen as potentially

destabilizing to the countries in which they sought asylum, and although "no clear refugee regime was established among nations, political ideology combined with a respect for territory and balance of power began to play an important role in bringing international recognition to the problem of refugees in the international system" (Barnett, 2002: p.3).

3) *The increasing acceptance by states of responsibility for the physical welfare of the indigent and helpless citizen*, *which meant that refugees could become a financial and social burden*. This meant that states gradually had to formulate plans and policies to deal with the social and financial costs of providing welfare to their citizens and other persons on their territory.

4) *The size and destructiveness of international warfare which has expanded to include civilian populations, eliminating for all practical purposes the distinction between combatant and non-combatant and uprooting people well beyond the end of actual fighting*. The practical responsibility these realities created for states necessitated responses that significantly influenced the development of the international refugee regime- at least in Europe, and especially in the wake of the two "world" wars.

By the twentieth century, specific problems and critical needs birthed the current international refugee regime. Gil Loescher (1994: p. 352 in Adisa, 1996: p.3) has divided the time into five specific periods in which the refugee question faced critical dilemmas and evolved specific characteristics and/or responses:

(1)　　The inter-war years, 1919 – 1939;

(2)　　The immediate post Second world war era;

(3)　　The period of expansion into the Third world during the late 1950s through to most of the 1970s[16];

(4)　　The 1980s when the regime faced long– standing refugee problems resulting from super power involvement in regional conflicts; and

(5)　　The current post – cold war era.

The consensus among scholars is that global governance of refugee problems and the contemporary international refugee regime was born in the aftermath of the First World War when the dissolution of multi-ethnic empires uprooted millions and rendered many homeless (Adisa 1996; Oyinloye 2004; Holborn 1939; Simpson 1939; Marrus 1985).

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[16] This period must necessarily include the decolonization era in Africa and the concurrent African take on the refugee issue.

Specifically, during the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, Greeks, Bulgarians and Turks were driven from their homes while the Poles and Balts fled from the marching armies. At the same time, the Hungarians were driven from Romania or Yugoslavia while ethnic Germans flooded out of Poland, and between 1913 and 1925, Bulgarians were forcibly moved after a change in their frontiers. The Russian Revolution of 1917 also produced about one and a half million refugees in the period following the revolution. The First World War itself resulted in the Armenians and Assyro- Chaldeans fleeing Asia Minor after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Ajala, 1998: p. 127). The persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany in the interwar period also created an important source of refugee flow as Jews fled the fascist regime in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Compounding the situation for the international community was the fact that the bulk of these displaced people were without necessary papers such as national passports, identification cards, or other protection. Some were able to settle among people of the same nationality or ethnic group, but were still faced with poverty and unemployment. Others who were not so 'lucky' wandered homelessly across Europe searching for refuge and vulnerable to attack by persons or communities who regarded them as undesirable. Even more so,

> the instinctive reaction of European governments was to close borders, erect protective barriers and expel [the displaced people] from their countries. Such reactions created large pools of refugees that compromised regional security and overwhelmed the capacity of national public, private and government agencies (Adisa, 1996: p.3-4).

This led the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of the time to formally present a request to the League of Nations in 1921 through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for help in coping with the enormous proportions of the problem. It seems then that the actual concept of 'refugee' as a separate and distinct category of persons in international practice was formally established in 1921, when the governments of the West agreed to establish the Office of a High Commissioner for Refugees to be headed by Fridtjof Nansen of Norway (League of Nations, 1921 in Jaeger, 1993: pp. 143,147,148). The establishment of this premier office for the coordination of specific refugee affairs marks the beginning of multilateral governmental involvement in the coordination of issues relating to refugees.

Dr. Nansen, who was until his appointment a renowned Arctic explorer, performed well the daunting task assigned to him. He coordinated massive refugee humanitarian operations,

including a difficult and controversial population exchange of Turkish and Greek refugees, and also provided assistance to Russians, Armenians and Bulgarians. Probably most importantly, he introduced the "Nansen passport," internationally recognized identity papers for refugees and the forerunner of today's Convention Travel Document for refugees. This was the first in an evolving series of international legal protection measures for refugees and other stateless persons (Loescher, 1994; UNHCR, 1993: p. 4).

This pioneer Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) was initially intended to be temporary and was given specific responsibility for Russian refugees, but the mandate was, in the 1930s expanded to include refugees resulting from the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, and later refugees from Germany and Austria, as Hitler's government progressively took control. The HCR focused on voluntary repatriation and resettlement of these refugees, with greater emphasis on repatriation (Barnett, 2002). The High Commission did not attempt to provide a general definition for refugees because the category of persons under its mandate was already defined. By 1933 the position of these groups was clarified in the Convention Relating to the International Status of Refugees, and also in the 1938 Convention on the Status of Refugees Coming From Germany (Barnett, 2002: p.4). The High Commission in 1938 became the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees under the protection of the League of Nations.

Obviously then, this refugee regime was a functionary of the League of Nations – with attendant consequences. The regime was limited in scope and authority as much as possible, and its mandate deliberately narrowed by governments, which assigned refugee status according to national whims and caprices. Besides, the decline of the viability of the League of Nations itself as it failed to command the respect of the powerful nations of the world – and indeed, even that of the weaker nations – greatly curtailed the ability of the refugee regime to cope with the enormous challenges of the immediate pre- World War II situation. The absence of both the United States and the USSR at this crucial time did not do much to help the ailing organisation.

It seems also that even in this early period, the importance of governments' willingness to cooperate on the refugee issue as prerequisite to effective coordination of efforts was apparent. The governance of the international refugee regime was therefore from the beginning riddled with states' ambivalence and their need to balance the tension between desires to control the boundaries of the state, maintain international and regional stability and

their concerns about burden-sharing and coordination. As Loescher observes, states found it difficult to

> yield authority to international refugee agencies and institutions and consequently [states] imposed considerable financial and political limitations on… the activities of [international refugee agencies]…. The great powers were unwilling to commit themselves to indefinite financial costs and large resettlement programs (Loescher, 1994: p. 352).

In 1938, a parallel organization to the League's office for refugees was created: the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR). Designed to coordinate the involvement of those states that were not members of the League of Nations, it was created mainly to respond to the flight of Jewish refugees, but is today known for the refusal of Western governments to admit more Jewish refugees into their territories, in spite of growing evidence of the scale of persecution in Germany (Ferris, 1993: p.5). The lack of response to Jewish refugees at this time is well documented in the literature (Abella and Troper, 1986; Wyman, 1968; Wasserstein, 1979; Loescher, 1994), including rationalizations ranging from economic considerations in post- Great Depression Europe (Joly and Nettleton, 1990: p. 7; Marrus, 1985: p.123) to plain international complacency and diplomatic prioritization (Kushner and Knox, 1999: p. 11 in Barnett, 2002: p. 5).

The Second World War represented another significant crisis period in the international response to refugees. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was set up in 1944 to work with NGOs to organize and coordinate the successful repatriation of some seven million (out of over thirty million) people displaced in Europe especially by the redrawn boundaries in the aftermath of the war. However, the UNRRA was held hostage by early Cold War dynamics and came under pressure from the Soviet Union to forcibly repatriate Soviet citizens from Germany to the Soviet Union – people who had legitimate grounds to fear repatriation on the basis of persecution. The UNRRA was also given mandate only over "displaced persons" under Allied control. This meant that there was need to address the issue of refugees arriving in large numbers from Eastern Europe and Soviet– occupied zones which were not covered by the UNRRA mandate. It was clear by this time to the international community that the post war refugee problem was enormous and complex and demanded urgent solutions.

When the mandate of the UNRRA expired in 1947, another temporary refugee agency, the International Refugee Organization (IRO) was set up in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA):

> The idea was to avert potential destabilization posed by the refugee problem and to internationalize the refugee effort by distributing costs and displaced people among the different states of Western Europe, North and South America, Australasia and certain parts of Africa (Adisa, 1996: pp.4-5; cf. Loescher, 1994: p. 356).

Thus the emphasis of the IRO was not on repatriation, but on resettlement- partly as an extension of Cold War ideology, and partly because most Western European countries needed the manpower in the aftermath of the war that decimated their most productive populations. Not unexpectedly then, the work of the IRO was affected by the emerging realities of the cold war, as evidenced in the fact the United States provided about two-thirds of the organization's funds *and* exercised exclusive control over the leadership (Adisa, 1996: p.5); and the fact that the Soviet Union refused to be a member of the organisation on the basis that the IRO was designed to promote American ideology and protect traitors from the USSR (Marrus, 1985: pp. 324, 342). The IRO's influence was also further curtailed by the lack of effective international legal instruments for the protection of refugees. Notwithstanding, the IRO signalled the UN's first concrete effort at addressing the international refugee problem. Between 1947 and 1951 when the IRO operated, it provided assistance for about 1.6 million people (Ajala, 1998: p.129; cf. Ruthstrom- Ruin, 1993: p.10 in Barnett, 2002: p. 6).

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was created at about this time to provide a "durable solution" to the Palestinian refugee problem which affected between 600,000 and 800,000 refugees who were denied repatriation by Israel and denied asylum by other Arab countries. However as scholars like Morris (1988) and Adelman (1988) have noted, what was to be a temporary situation became permanent, and the "temporary" camps have become permanent camps, with the UNRWA being the only enduring solution to the plight of these persons.

On December 14, 1950 the UNGA adopted the statute setting up the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as an agency to "assume the functions of providing international protection… to refugees," as well as seek permanent solutions to the problems of the refugees. The establishment of the UNHCR was also influenced by the

political and financial realities that affected the IRO before it. The initial reaction of the United States and other Western European countries was to limit financial and diplomatic support to it, at least in the initial years of its operation. Infact, "the United Nations High Commission for Refugees… was given a three-year mandate and was then expected to 'go out of business' with the problem solved [permanently]" (UNHCR, 2001: p.2). Consequently, the UNHCR had to renew its mandate every three, then five, years since then.

All these notwithstanding, the UNHCR mandate expanded and especially so, beginning with its involvement in the refugee crisis resulting from the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and other crises fuelled by the Cold War. Today, the UNHCR has primary responsibility for the international protection of refugees and is also given the mandate to find "durable solutions" to the refugee problem. This formed the background to the organization's expansion of the international refugee regime in the periods following its establishment, including expansion to accommodate the needs of the developing world including Africa. This background also bequeathed hard consequences for the international refugee protection regime, and continues to resound in debates relating to the contemporary protection of refugees – including the very definition of refugee status (Ferris, 1993: pp. 8-10, 24; Loescher, 1994: pp. 357-358; UNHCR, 1993: p. 5).

2.1.2 Who is a refugee?

Central to the definition of refugee status in the contemporary international refugee regime is the document that has became known as the Magna Carta of international refugee law: the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Signed just seven months after the establishment of the UNHCR, in July 1951, the UN Refugee Convention was instrumental in regularizing the status of refugees at the critical time when the international community was finally beginning to realize that the problems of refugees could not just be wished away. The UN Convention defines a refugee to be any person who

> Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence… is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to return to it. [Article 1 A(2)].

It is important to note that although this was the first truly comprehensive approach to setting an international standard for determining refugee status, it fell short in certain ways. In the

first place, it limited the definition of refugees to persons who became refugees "as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951." Furthermore, states signatories were given the option of recognizing either refugees as a result of events occurring in Europe only or in Europe and elsewhere [Article 1 B (1)] (Turk, 1999: p. 161). As noted below, this was as a result of the political realities of the period, and the drafters of the document felt that "it would be difficult for governments to sign a blank check and to undertake obligations towards future refugees, the origin and number of which would be unknown" (Achiron, 2001: p. 10).

The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees was designed to eliminate the temporal and geographical limitations of the 1951 UN Convention, having taken note of new refugee situations that had arisen since the conclusion of the latter. It retained the definition of refugees given in the 1951 UN convention, only omitting the words "as a result of events occurring before 1 January, 1951…."[17]

However, subsequent events occurring outside Europe in the post Second World War era showed up the inadequacies of the definition of refugee status contained in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. In this era also, refugee problems, rather than fading away became more complex, and the number of people seeking refuge swelled from one million (1950) to an all time high of 27 million in 1995 (Achiron, 2001: p. 13). Moreover, new categories of exiles were created in the decades following the 1951 convention and regional peculiarities further necessitated more specific, more relevant definitions of refugees in specific regions. In response to these realities, several regional instruments emerged to broaden the definition of the term refugee.

As early as 1963, African governments under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) saw the need for a refugee treaty to address the peculiarities of the refugee situation in Africa. Consequently, the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa was adopted on September 10, 1969, and came into force five years later on June 10, 1974 - the date now celebrated annually as Africa Refugee Day.

The 1969 OAU Convention, while adopting the definition in the 1951 UN Convention as amended by the 1967 protocol, broadens refugee definition to include:

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[17] See Article 1 (2) of the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

> 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 [Article 1(2)].

It seems that the OAU expanded the definition of refugees

> to address the particular needs of people who had become refugees as a result of decolonization, struggle for national liberation, and the creation of new states [in Africa]. The Convention has explicitly protected a wider group of refugees, including those fleeing armed struggle, civil strife and apartheid (Ajala, 1998: p. 131).

This precedent was followed by Central American states together with Mexico and Panama in 1984. Representatives met at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, to elaborate a vision of refugee protection designed to meet the specific needs of the people of Central America. Thus while adopting the definition of the 1951 UN Convention as amended by the 1967 protocol, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees extended its definition of a refugee in Central America to people threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression and internal conflicts – and most remarkably, to those fleeing "massive violation of human rights" (Walzer, 1995: p.22). This landmark definition has been included in the laws of several states.

The four documents discussed above – the 1951 UN Convention, the 1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration – form the core legal protection instruments in the international protection of refugees today. However, while the regional definitions have allowed for a needed flexibility and response to regional realities, they have also produced a scenario in which persons considered refugees in one part of the world are not so considered elsewhere. Furthermore, despite the expansions in definition of refugee status, none of these instruments directly addresses the ever-growing problems of about 25 million internally-displaced persons.

2.1.3 Refugee Protection

The entire international refugee regime as we know it today revolves around the *protection* of refugees. When a person is recognized under international law as being eligible for refugee status, the necessary implication is an entitlement to protection, immediate assistance and efforts to find a permanent ("*durable*") solution to the person's plight. Indeed, protection is at the heart of the responsibility that the international community bears towards refugees.

Basically, *protection* of refugees has to do with all the measures taken to guarantee the basic rights of persons who can no longer depend on their own national governments for the protection of their basic rights or the enforcement of laws designed to guarantee their safety. Protection of refugees is aimed at alleviating the consequences of war for individuals "by offering victims a degree of international legal protection and other assistance and eventually to help them begin their lives anew" (UNHCR, 2001: p. 17). Indeed,

> [W]hat sets refugees apart from other people in need of humanitarian aid is their need for international protection. Most people can look to their own governments and state institutions to protect their rights and physical security even if imperfectly. Refugees cannot…. The protection that the international community extends to refugees recognizes the specific needs of people who have good reason to fear that their own governments will not or cannot provide safeguards against abuse. It provides a temporary substitute for the normal safeguards until the refugee can again benefit from national protection (UNHCR, 1993: p. 5).

National protection can be said to exist as long as the state is able and willing to ensure the security of its citizens, as long as those citizens recognize the legitimacy of the state, and as long as different groups within society acknowledge the need for them to reconcile their differences by peaceful means (UNHCR, 1998: p. 8). Regrettably however, international protection measures are not designed to bring an end to the causes of refugee flow namely, civil strife, war, persecution and human rights violations, and there is need for concrete political action to achieve this end.

Over the past few decades, as nations gradually developed what has been called "an international conscience," efforts to protect and assist refugees became of global concern. As discussed earlier, the Nansen office, UNRRA, IRO, UNRWA, UNHCR were established at various periods to contribute to the international protection of refugees. Alongside these agencies also developed a body of refugee law. The 1933 League of Nations Convention Relating to the International Status of Refugees and the 1938 Convention concerning the Status of Refugees coming from Germany provided limited legal protection at the time. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights further states that "*everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.*" This means that the right to asylum is crucial to refugee protection.

The 1951 UN Convention, while not explicitly stating the right to asylum, makes provision in Article 32 for the prohibition of the expulsion of refugees, except on grounds of national security or public order, and Article 33 prohibits expulsion or return of refugees to the

frontier of territories where their lives would be threatened – the legal principle of ***non-refoulement.*** The 1969 OAU Convention reiterates this principle in its Article 2 (3), stating that "no person shall be subjected by a member state to measures such as rejection at the frontier, return or expulsion, which would compel him [or her] to return to or remain in a territory where his life, physical integrity or liberty would be threatened…."

The above implies that the protection of refugees and entitlement to non-refoulement becomes possible only when the individual has been accepted by the country of asylum. However, traditionally, in public international law, the right of asylum means only a right for a state to grant asylum; there is no corresponding right of an individual to be granted asylum. Unfortunately, this traditional view has persisted in influencing the practice of states (Eriksson et al, 1981: p. 17). The basic understanding of national sovereignty implies the state's right to control its borders, and to decide who is a citizen, who may enter and under what conditions, who may stay and under what conditions. This is the major reason why the definition of refugee is central to protection (Oyinloye, 2004: p. 28).

Notwithstanding, the basis for asylum and non-refoulement is time-honoured. Philosophers and writers from Moses to Plato to Grotius and de Vattel developed asylum as an ethical principle for governments, and according to Grahl-Madsen (1983) writing from a legal perspective, non-refoulement is "a basic principle of civilized government – and thus one of the cornerstones of international law" (Grahl- Madsen in Oyinloye 2004 at p. 29).

Protection must also include physical security of refugees, in addition to the legal protection offered by international law. According to UNHCR, physical protection is two-pronged (UNHCR, 1993: p. 5): Personal security from physical attack whether from armed forces, death squads or lone assassins constitutes one dimension of physical protection; Physical protection also means keeping people alive through humanitarian assistance- food, water, sanitation and heath care are fundamental to survival. These requirements have today become more urgent as most refugee crises erupt right in the midst of serious armed conflict.

Today, UNHCR exercises primary responsibility for the international protection of refugees and is also given the mandate to find "durable solutions" to the refugee problem. The solutions favoured by UNHCR, which have today become classic are, voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement in a third country – in order of preference. UNHCR'S lead role is supported by the activities of host governments, international governmental and non-governmental organizations and the refugees themselves.

2.1.4 Durable solutions and the International Refugee regime

As indicated in the preceding sections, the cradle of the international refugee regime was Europe and the events on that continent in the first half of the twentieth century contributed more than any other factor to contemporary refugee practice and even dictate the response to the refugee problem in other parts of the world.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the global refugee regime underwent definite metamorphosis and took on specific characteristics. Specifically, the discourse became overwhelmingly centred around the location and application of "durable solutions[18] to refugee problems". Scholars have attempted to chart the development of the emphasis on specific 'durable solutions'[19] as a means of uncovering the historical, ideological and political bases that underlie the operation of the current international refugee regime. Schaffer (n.d.: p. 1) informs us that the term 'durable solutions' was coined by the UNHCR which also simultaneously took it upon herself to apply these to the 'problems' of refugees. B.S. Chimni (1999: p. 1) posits that the history of durable solutions to the refugee situation in the post Second World War period can be divided into two distinct and broad phases: the first phase lasted roughly from 1945 to 1985; while the second phase spans 1985 up until 1999- the year in which he advanced this argument.

In the period following the Second World War, the international political system became quickly split into two rival ideological factions following the rivalry that crystallized between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The cold war that ensued had decided consequences for the global political system and particularly influenced the development of responses to the refugee situation that trailed the Second World War. In the early days of the refugee regime, Nansen, the first High Commissioner for Refugees favoured repatriation, as did the UNRRA in the initial days of the Cold War[20].

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[18] By "durable solution" is meant any measure that ends refugee status for the individuals/ groups involved. It is unclear however what durability means or how it can be guaranteed at the start of the process of application to each specific case. Further, we may ask: solution for whom? See James Hathaway (2006) "Refugee Solutions, or solutions to refugeehood?"

[19] I apply parentheses to the term "durable solutions" because following critical feminist tradition I favour a critical examination of how language is used to legitimize behaviour, actions and policies that otherwise would be highly questionable. However, wherever the parentheses do not appear, I encourage the reader to continue to read a question into the term "durable solution".

[20] Of the existing 42 million refugees at the end of the Second World War, the UNRRA is credited with repatriating up to seven million refugees between 1945 and 1947. See Laura Barnett (2002: p. 6).

However, the emerging dynamics of the post war system eventually necessitated a switch from the possibility of repatriation to the near mandating of resettlement. In the first place, "within a year of the end of the second world war the question of a solution to the refugee problem had become an integral part of the Cold War" (Chimni, 1999: p. 2). The Soviet Union advocated the repatriation of persons fleeing Soviet occupied territories while the US and other western powers actively promoted and sponsored the integration and resettlement of large numbers of refugees fleeing Eastern Europe. Writers like Amore (2002), Ghanem (2003), Chimni (1998, 1999), Allen and Morsink (1994), highlight the politics of the time that made resettlement and integration the durable solutions of choice in that historical period. In the words of Tania Ghanem:

> …despite the fact that voluntary repatriation was considered the preferred solution to the refugee problem *in principle* (as testified in the early United Nations resolutions), *in practice*, refugees were strongly encouraged to settle and integrate in the countries in which they had sought asylum. Indeed, as a result of Cold War politics, people fleeing communist countries and taking refuge in the Western bloc were seen as "voting with their feet", thereby delegitimising the Eastern bloc…. At the same time, Western powers felt protected from potential mass influxes of refugees since Eastern European governments obstructed nationals from leaving the country…. (emphasis in original text; Ghanem, 2003: p.10; cf. Amore, 2002: p. 161; Chimni, 1998: pp. 355-356; Chimni, 1999: pp 2-3; Allen and Morsink, 1994: p. 3; Gallagher in Amore, 2002: p. 162).

Another crucial factor explicated in the literature and that most authors seem to concur with and that explains the choice of the solutions of integration and local resettlement is the economic situation in Europe at the end of the war. The devastation of infrastructure and depletion of manpower after the war, coupled with unprecedented economic growth contributed to the decision of the western powers to open their doors to thousands of refugees to serve as an alternative source of cheap labour for the task of post war reconstruction[21]. Little wonder then that post war economic recovery was not only rapid in the Western European countries that participated in the war, but there was an episode of economic boom right after the war. MacDonald Ighodaro concludes therefore that "the influx of refugees [into Western Europe] tremendously facilitated fast economic resurgence which counterbalanced the loss of the workforce during the war" (Ighodaro, n.d.: p. 51; *cf.* Gorman and Kibreab, 1997: p. 39; Stoessinger, 1963: p. 114 in Chimni, 1999: p. 2).

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[21] For example, Barnett (2002: p. 6) informs us that many Polish soldiers were allowed to stay in England at the end of the war to help fill the need for labour.

For the reasons given above, the western powers threw their weight behind the solutions of resettlement and integration in the country of asylum for the refugees of the time. The agency responsible for refugees at the time, the IRO, being controlled by the US and other western governments focused on resettlement schemes: "Although it was evident to IRO officials that the cost of repatriation per refugee was a fraction of the cost of resettlement, this argument never appeared in the discussions of the General Council" (Stoesinger, 1963: p. 111, as cited in Chimni, 1999: p. 3).

It was this mindset that informed the development of international refugee law along those lines. In 1950, at a time when the IRO was being dissolved and UNHCR was being established, the UN Secretary-General recommended:

> The refugees will lead an independent life in the countries which have given them shelter. With the exception of 'hard core' cases, the refugees will no longer be maintained by an international organization as they are at present. They will be **integrated** in the economic system of the countries of asylum and will themselves provide for their own needs and those of their families. This will be a phase of the **settlement and assimilation** of the refugees (cited in Crisp, 2004: p.3; emphasis mine).

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention also advocated the integration of refugees in their country of asylum. According to article 34 of the UN Convention, "the contracting states shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings".

Thus this preference for the solutions of resettlement and integration continued to be favoured by the western powers until the 1980s when shifting refugee dynamics resulted in a gradual but definite abandonment of resettlement and integration as favoured durable solutions to refugee problems and the move towards repatriation instead. Notable in this context also is the rise of the refugee question in post colonial Africa. The following section addresses the concept and context of the elevation of repatriation, voluntary or forced, to the level of preferred durable solution.

2.2 A Critical *Re*-examination of Repatriation as Durable Solution to Refugee Problems

> Refugee problems can only be solved in three different ways - through voluntary repatriation, through resettlement overseas, and through integration either in the country of present residence or in combination with intra-European migration. **Of these solutions, voluntary repatriation is no longer of great importance…. As far as we can predict, voluntary repatriation will in the years to come account for not more than one percent of the solutions to refugee problems still to be solved….** (Dr. Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart, UN High Commissioner for Refugees 1950-1956, from the text of the Nobel Lecture given at the receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1955; emphasis mine).

The history of durable solutions after the Second World War forms the background for any discussion of voluntary repatriation in the international refuge regime. In the fifty years since the viewpoint expressed by Dr van Heuven Goedhart was held by the UNHCR, partner governments and the international community as a whole[22], voluntary repatriation has changed status in the hierarchy of solutions available to the refugee from a best- solution- in-principle-only to the most- promoted –solution- in- practice.

The reasons are not very farfetched, as writers from the political south (and some from the political north) assert. While UNHCR has spent the last two decades or so developing, promoting and justifying[23] the elaborate regime now surrounding the policy of voluntary repatriation, refugee scholars and practitioners have found it pertinent to re-evaluate the theoretical, ideological and practical justifications for the promotion of voluntary repatriation as *the* preferred solution to refugee problems.

In the first place, Coles (in Allen and Morsink, 1994: pp.1, 2) in a review of the relevant literature observes that the elevation of voluntary repatriation to the level of preferred durable solution was not accompanied by any in-depth research on the matter. In the early 1980s, at the time when the argument for a rethink of the cold war approach to solutions was being advocated by states and practitioners, the office of the UNHCR complained that voluntary repatriation as a solution had "not been examined in any depth by experts or scholars" (Stein, 1990: p.202). However the agency's Executive Committee went ahead with a major Conclusion on the subject (UNHCR, 1985) and according to Chimni (1999: p. 4): "A few years later, unconstrained by the politics of the Cold War, UNHCR declared the decade of

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[22] Some early refugee theorists also shared the view that voluntary repatriation was not likely to be of any significance as a durable solution to refugee problems. See Simpson (1939), Holborn (1975: p.325).

[23] See for example Jeff Crisp (2000: pp. 16-17), defending the practice of repatriation in Africa, citing it as pertinent to validating the post war order in post conflict African countries.

1990s to be the decade of repatriation. Needless to add, it was not the sudden availability of scholarly studies which emboldened the organization to make such an announcement."

Schaffer (n.d.) in her review of the "too few studies of repatriation" (ibid: p.2), identifies four central critiques put forward by her contemporaries which remain relevant today:

> The criticisms levelled against the international community, and against the UNHCR as its instrument, are still valid today... [These include] that voluntary repatriation has been researched insufficiently, that it ought not to be promoted unquestioningly as the most desirable solution for all refugees, that returning home is not simple and straightforward, and that voluntariness is compromised by 'tripartite agreements' which do not involve the refugees... (ibid: p. 4).

Much of the scholarly critique of voluntary repatriation calls into question the underlying assumptions that support the policy. Harrell-Bond (1989: pp 23, 43) earlier observed that no published research data for testing the underlying assumptions of current international (refugee repatriation) practice existed. It is important therefore for us to examine a little more closely these assumptions and deconstruct them to the extent that they have direct or indirect influence on the policy of repatriation touted by the UNHCR, governments and non-governmental elements of the international community.

Sepulveda (1996) believes that the assumption which lies behind the idea that repatriation is the best possible solution is that "a singular and immutable bond exists between a 'people' and a particular 'space' " (ibid: p. 8) - the territorialization of space and identity. While acknowledging arguments to the contrary, Kibreab (1999: p. 387) posits that the modern international political system is such that "spaces are more territorialized than ever before.... 'Fortress Europe' is the culmination of the territorialization process."

This idea is further expounded by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)(1992) which explains that the discourse surrounding displacement and solutions "contains the implicit assumption that a given population has its own proper 'place', territory or homeland. This assumption is deeply embedded in the European political theory of nationalism, according to which there is a natural identity between people and place and the world is naturally made up of clearly bounded politico-territorial entities – sovereign states" (UNRISD, 1992: p. 7).

This is why, Ghanem (2003, p. 15) explains in support of Hammond (1999: pp. 229- 230)[24], refugees are perceived as *up*rooted and *dis*placed and returnees are considered to be naturally '*re*-rooted' and placed back in the right order of things [*re*-placed] as soon as they are 'back home'. It seems inescapable thus that we challenge this "static and unrealistic 'repatriation = homecoming' model" (emphasis in original text).

The logical consequence of the 'territoriality' mode of thinking is the international community's unsubstantiated "reliance on the questionable assumptions that *all* refugees want to go home and the best place for refugees is home" (Sepulveda, 1996: p. 11, emphasis mine). This assumption, asserts Chimni (1999: p. 5), "was not seen as a 'hypothesis to be tested' (Sepulveda, 1996: pp 12- 13), but as a statement of fact which presumed knowledge of refugees" – implying a certain arrogance of attitude which precluded further investigation of repatriation theory and practice.

Thus we can identify a number of scenarios in which refugees would be reluctant to go back to their country of origin, and in fact it would not be advantageous for them to do so even if they so wished. Some of these include: the situation of second generation refugees (Rogge, 1994; Chimni, 1999); a bifurcation of the idea of home for long time refugees (Graham and Khosravi, 1997); the non removal of the cause of fear or persecution for the individual even when the general situation of conflict or unrest has abated (Oyinloye, 2004); a gendered view (Lopez- Zarzosa, 1998) that acknowledges the fault in the idealization of 'home' which may not translate into peace for women who return to the same patriarchal social structures that governed them before exile.

Without the critical research that would have made a difference in the way repatriation was introduced and implemented, why then was there the haste to implement it as preferred durable solution? Scholars underscore the historical milieu that projected repatriation into the limelight as having relevance for answering this cogent question. Up until the 1970s, when the cold war was still chillingly fierce, refugees in Europe continued to enjoy favourable

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[24] Hammond's assertion (1999: p. 230) is very thought-provoking: "Terms to be found in the discourse of repatriation include: *reintegration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, rebuilding, readjustment, readaptation, reacculturation, reassimilation, reinsertion, reintroduction, recovery* and *re-establishment*. (…) **Among the most problematic terms of the repatriation canon are the very words *return* and *returnee*, which imply that by re-entering one's native country a person is necessarily returning to something familiar. These terms are riddled with value judgments** that reflect a segmentary, sedentary idea of how people ought to live, what their relation to their 'homeland' should be, and ultimately how they should go about constructing their lives once the period of exile ends." (additional emphasis mine)

asylum policies from the governments of the west. Within this international regime the United States' dominant presence in the United Nations shaped the responses to refugees and created the political environment within which all negotiations about refugees were carried out[25].

However, about this time, significant changes began to take place in Western Europe while refugee dynamics also underwent a transformation. The acute shortage of labour that had characterized the immediate post war era had receded and, with the economic collapse of the 1970s, the countries of the west tightened border restrictions against perceived economic migrants thereby shutting the door even on genuine refugees. Kushner and Knox (1999: p. 335) record that the European Community's harmonization of immigration regulations created a fortress mentality by which internal border controls were relaxed while migrants from without were repelled. These refuges or migrants were now mostly from the developing countries, and their presence at the doorsteps of western countries (including the US) was perceived as an economic threat and as potentially destabilising in terms of security (ibid: p. 11).

More especially, Africa was also experiencing an explosion in refugee numbers due in part to decolonization struggles, and in part to superpower rivalry being played out on the continent. By this time, individual persecution was no longer the most important refugee producing factor as millions of refugees emerged from the context of civil war, communal violence and some or the other type of general/public disorder. The refugee regime had involuntarily shifted in emphasis from East- West flows to the reality of rising South- North flows.

It was within this setting that the solution of resettlement came to be reconsidered by the dominant states in the international system. It seems thus that the reconceptualisation of refugee solutions in the 1980s to favour repatriation was not altruistically conceived per se; repatriation as best solution was the direct result of the unwillingness of western states to participate in the (new) refugee situation, thereby relinquishing responsibility to the countries of origin and of first asylum. Ighodaro (n.d.: p. 51) argues that the choice of repatriation at this critical time in the history of the refugee regime was born out of the xenophobic tendencies that saw the western countries shutting their doors and resisting the influx of the "new asylum seekers" who were no longer mostly white males as in the days of the cold war.

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[25] Spijkerboer (2000, p. 197) notes interestingly that until the mid- 1980s, 90% of all refugees to the United States itself were from the Eastern bloc.

We may therefore make one fundamental conclusion arising from the historical evidence examined above, and this is that "humanitarian objectives do not shape the refugee policies of the dominant states in the international system. [This fact] underlines the need to be alert to the non-humanitarian objectives which are pursued by these actors from time to time" (Chimni, 1999: p.3; cf. Salomon, 1991: p. 255).

The historical expediencies discussed above, that propelled repatriation onto the centre stage of refugee solutions, created a further complication for the advocates of the regime. The literature records that refugee voices were not consulted in this process and have since then been systematically ignored by the regime that developed to work the policy of repatriation. For example, tripartite agreements are signed between the UNHCR, countries of asylum and of origin, without any regard for the preference of the refugee in the whole process.

With the systematic marginalisation of refugee voices in the decision making process that gives birth to repatriation, the voluntariness of repatriation has been questioned by scholars and refugee rights activists. Hathaway (2006, 2005, 1997), a legal expert on refugee issues, citing the UN Refugee Convention and relevant UNHCR documents argues that the requirement of voluntariness is not contained in the UN Convention and has only become emphasized in the discourse due to the UNHCR's endorsement of it. He states his stance thus (and we quote somewhat extensively):

> As we all know, there is strong support for regarding repatriation as the best solution to refugeehood…. As the language of the [UNHCR's] Executive Committee makes clear, support is not normally expressed for "repatriation" as a solution to refugeehood, but rather for "voluntary repatriation". Which sounds nice, right? Wrong…. On closer examination, the routine use of this "voluntary repatriation" terminology can be seen to be problematic. While anchored in the language of the UNHCR Statute, and hence logically taken into account in determining what sorts of role *the agency* can take on, the rights of state parties to the Refugee Convention are quite differently conceived. The Convention only allows governments to bring refugee status to an end when there has been either "voluntary reestablishment" (not repatriation) or when there has been a "fundamental change of circumstances" in the country of origin which justifies the cessation of refugee status (not when UNHCR decides that the moment is right to promote "voluntary repatriation")…. If − and only if − these demanding criteria are met, return need not be voluntary so long as it is carried out in a rights- regarding way. (Hathaway, 2006: pp 8, 9, 10, 11; emphasis in original text).

And in an earlier article he concludes quite vehemently that "it is wishful legal thinking to suggest that a voluntariness requirement can be superimposed on the text of the Refugee Convention" (Hathaway, 1997: p553).

Once again, there is historical underpinning to this theoretical frame as, in the 1990s forced repatriation became both practice and official policy of the UNHCR under the doctrine of "safe return" and "imposed return". These policies were not intended to replace voluntary repatriation; rather they were UNHCR's way of coping with her limitations of resources with respect to voluntary repatriation. However notions of repatriation that rely on the cessation clause found in the UN Refugee convention [Article 1 (C) (4)] accord to state parties the right to decide when refugee status comes to an end. This is referred to as objectivism in the determination of cessation of refugee protection and status. Objectivism implies that there is some reality existing outside the individual that can be independently observed, assessed and concluded about. In this case it implies that the causes of refugee flows are generally observable, therefore, states parties and agencies like the UNHCR can by observation of the general situation of things determine when the fear of persecution is no more for specific groups of refugees, and thereby cease to offer them protection.

The unfairness of this interpretation is well captured by Chimni (1999: pp7, 8) thus:

> Objectivism, in my view, disenfranchises the refugee through eliminating his or her voice in the process leading to the decision to deny or terminate protection…. Unfortunately, however, facts do not exist outside the world of interpretation. Therefore, most often, what objectivism tends to do is to substitute the subjective perceptions of the State authorities for the experience of the refugee… Is it not strange that whereas the element of subjectivity is celebrated when it translates into the spontaneous return of the refugee, it is ignored when it involves a decision to stay…? In the same vein, you are charged with ignoring refugee voices when you suggest, for instance, that UNHCR should not promote spontaneous return unless it is convinced that the return can take place in safety and dignity. On the other hand, when refugee voices are in favour of staying and UNHCR protests their return, little heed is to be paid to these voices. This "heads I win and tails you lose" logic needs to be squarely rejected.

As Hathaway (2006: p.13) succinctly concludes, "the 'voluntary repatriation' language – which sounds positive, rights-regarding, autonomy-affirming – is, in practice, being relied upon to deny refugee rights."

It is important to also bear in mind that the solution of resettlement at the time when it was prevailing combined both objective and subjective criteria (the refugee's own assessment of

his or her status) in determination of persons who qualify for protection. These double standards suggest to us that both the preference for repatriation and the standard of voluntariness are dependent on the political will of concerned states and agencies. Indeed both Hathaway (2006: pp. 11-20) and Ghanem (2003: p. 11) point out the overbearing role of the UNHCR in actively promoting, facilitating and defending the solution of repatriation to critics, donor states and others.

Some other scholars emphasise the financial considerations that made repatriation the solution of choice in the contemporary international refugee regime. While Stoessinger (1963: p. 111) informs us that repatriation has always been the cheaper solution to pursue, Schaffer (n.d.) believes that factor only came into play at that point in time when the powerful states in the regime became reluctant to commit funds and resources to the problems of the now mostly third world refugees.

In Africa, specifically, this factor becomes more potent in unravelling current repatriation practice which, in reality, is more imposed than voluntary. In the so- called "golden age" (Rutinwa, 1999: p.4) of asylum in Africa, the 1960s up until the 1980s, African refugee host states were welcoming and accepting of persons finding refuge on their territory. One of the factors that made this possible even in the face of rising refugee numbers was the relative reliability of the system of burden sharing by which "an implicit deal was struck whereby African states admitted refugees to their territory and provided the land required to accommodate them. And as a reciprocal gesture…donor states provided the funding…" (Crisp, 2000: p. 5). Unfortunately, donor states (which are all countries from the political north) became increasingly unwilling to commit themselves both at the level of asylum and at the level of resources (Chimni, 1999: p. 11), and began putting pressure on host states to end longstanding refugee situations and repatriate refugees from new refugee movements as soon as possible. The implication for poor African host states is that refugees must either repatriate or become the sole responsibility of host states (Rutinwa, 1996:p. 318).

Underlying all these is the assumption that repatriation is the least problematic solution to refugee problems. Rogge (1994: p. 21) has argued that this problem-free nature of repatriation is "a myth" and this observation has since been borne out in refugee experience in the past decade and a half or so. Further, in the existing literature, the focus has been on the legal, political and logistical implications of repatriation, with disregard for the experience of refugees once they are back in their country of origin. Thus various authors have commented

on the virtual neglect of studies addressing the issue of how refugees adapt to returning to the country of origin, and how the refugees themselves perceive their reintegration (Kibreab, 2002: p. 55; Ghanem, 2003: p. 14; Hammond, 1999: p. 227-228; Cornish et al, 1999: p. 265; Kjertum, 1998: p. 27; Majodina, 1995: p. 210; Rogge, 1994: p. 15).

In sum, it seems that there is a difference in the way policy makers and states practitioners on the one hand, and advocates and activists on the other conceptualize repatriation. Indeed the entire discourse on forced migration appears to lack this internal coherence such that, as Turton (2003: p. 15) puts it, it appears that the two sides are talking past each other, rather than communicating by a set of shared meanings (cf. Jeff Crisp in Barnett, 2002: p. 20)[26]. Nowhere is this observation more apparent than in the literature on durable solutions and repatriation as surveyed above.

Even more importantly, the metaphorical reference to refugee 'flows', 'streams', 'waves' and 'trickles', though seemingly innocently employed actually require us to think of refugees and other migrants as an undifferentiated mass, as molecules in a liquid (Turton, 2003: pp. 4, 5). Contrarily, the effects of forced migration vary in different political, socioeconomic and cultural contexts, and vary according to various factors such as gender, class, age, race or ethnicity- a theme scantily pursued in the literature on refugees.

2. 3 Conceptualizing Gender

'Gender' is a term commonly used in the English language to refer to the male and female sexes – a fact necessitating its being defined in feminist literature in contradistinction to 'sex'. Whereas *sex* refers to the primary and secondary physical/ biological attributes that distinguish males from females, *gender* refers to the attributes assigned by culture and society to masculinity and femininity; that is, the social definitions of what it means to be masculine or feminine (UNHCR, 2003b; Chhabra, 2005). It concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between the sexes (Giddens, 2001: p. 107). In sociological terms, gender is more of an *achieved* status, while sex is (biologically) ascribed (Skjelbaek, 1997; West and Zimmerman, 1987).

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[26] In the words of UNHCR's Jeff Crisp, "there is a difference between advocacy and operations – a necessary contradiction. Advocacy can afford to be absolutist while organizations like UNHCR have to compromise and make choices, sometimes having to accept the 'least worst solution'."

Essentially then gender is socially constructed reality- the roles, behaviours, and expectations learned by males and females respectively (World Bank, 2001), and the interactions between them that constantly create and recreate these positions (Lorber, 2000: p. 74). Gender is the *process* by which individuals, in social interactions throughout their lives "learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in expected ways, and thus simultaneously construct and maintain the gender order" (Lorber, 2000: pp. 75-76). This process of gendering becomes even more entrenched as it is legitimated by religion, law, science, and society's entire set of values.

Central to any analysis of the concept of gender is the disparity in power relations that accompany the social assignment of roles to specific genders. Katharina Samara (2002: p. 31) defines gender in this mould simply as "men and women and the relations of power, or lack thereof, between them." According to Lammers (1999), gender *inequality* is usually "worked out by means of prescribed gender roles and… a more implicit power structure of gender symbolism." It seems then that the assignment of specific roles to specific genders in all societies lies at the root of the ranking (or *stratification*) that puts women lower on the social rung than their male counterparts in any society (cf. Chodorow 1978).   Thus gender differences are "rarely neutral – in almost all societies, gender is a significant form of social stratification" (Giddens, 2001: p. 112). This is because whatever the roles or responsibilities assigned to women and men in any society, men's roles are almost universally more highly valued and rewarded than women's roles. The resultant effect historically therefore has been the unequal positions occupied by women and men with respect to power, wealth and prestige[27].

Related to the above is the perception of gender as a social *structure* or *institution*. That is, gender is not only a process and mode of stratification, but is also a fundamental means by which people organize their lives and society fulfils certain functions. Connell (1987: pp. 91-142) explains that gender divides work in the home and in economic production, legitimates those in authority, and organizes sexuality and emotional life. This aspect of gender, Judith Lorber contends, "is produced and maintained by identifiable social processes and built into the   general   social   structure   and   individual   identities   deliberately   and

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[27] Of course, as Judith Lorber (2000, p. 77) rightly observes, "[s]ocieties vary in the extent of the inequality in social status of their women and men members, but where there is inequality, the status 'woman' (and its attendant behavior and role allocations) is usually held in lesser esteem than the status 'man'."

purposefully….therefore…the continuing purpose of gender as a modern social institution is to construct women as a group to be the subordinates of men as a group" (2000: p. 78).

It seems then that the creation of gender inequality is linked to the human capability for choice which not only allows us to choose to adopt feminine or masculine behaviour, but also makes possible the deliberate maintenance of the inequalities so created. Skjelbaek (1997) argues that "the irony of this capacity for choice is that we cannot escape our gender identity. As such, gender is what some have termed our *master identity*" (emphasis in original text).

Furthermore, gender identities are culturally and historically specific (Lammers, 1999), indicating that there is no universal, one-time meaning attached to the notions of maleness or femaleness. The idea of gender is not shared between all people, but holds social meaning for individual cultures, and is adapted as the culture changes (Crawley 2000 in Demir 2003).

Specifically, scholars from the south and African American feminists have found it necessary, in line with Marxist/ socialist/ radical feminist tradition to contest the universality evident in extant gender theorizing which they assert is Eurocentric, Western and middle class in orientation. The argument is two-fold: *first*, that the social construction of gender is actually a multifaceted process involving "a range of interlocking inequalities" (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 2000), "a matrix of domination" (Hill Collins 1990) - including but not limited to racial, ethnic and class inequalities; *secondly*, that 'gender' bears remarkably different meanings and characteristics for non- white, non- middleclass women and men.

In order to make sense of the assertions of this school of feminist thought, it behoves us to make a brief detour through the account of the development of feminist scholarship and activism. In the literature, the first feminist movement is reported to have started in England in the late nineteenth century. The English suffragettes employed sometimes radical means to achieve the right of women to vote as a means for them to escape the oppressive patriarchy they are subjected to by society. The suffragist movement in the United States about this same time was also engaged in achieving the same objective, eventually achieving the right of American women to vote in 1920. Apparently, with the attainment of this fundamental objective, the feminist movement lay dormant until the 1960s.

The feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s was focused on challenging patriarchy not only in the public sphere but even more so in the 'private' sphere of the family and work environment. This feminist movement was characterized by a close link between activist and

academic feminists, resulting in a movement that prioritized research and was highly critical of existing ways of *knowing* reality. This strand of feminism thus bequeathed important legacies for subsequent decades of feminist activism. However, one important shortcoming of the feminist expression of that time is that there was the assumption that one *essential* woman existed, needing liberation from one common enemy- male man. It is this assumption that birthed the criticism by feminist scholars of colour who rejected the notion of a universal experience for all women, declaring instead that in many ways they (Third World and African American women) had more in common with their own men than with white women[28].

Throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s, feminists from the south (and some from the north too) built up the argument for a gender analysis that rejects all essentialism and recognizes difference to go beyond sex difference. Entering into the debate, African women's organisations such as Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) and the Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN) challenged the Eurocentric approach to studying gender and adopted a critical gender research agenda (Steady 2002; Egwu 2003).

The challenge of this strand of feminism is fundamental to our understanding of gender as social process, social stratification and social structure. If gender is social structure, then any investigation of gender must take into account how it intersects with other pertinent structures of social differentiation. The insistence on difference recognizes that social location in terms of race, ethnicity, status, class and access to power and privilege can significantly alter the meaning of gender as these other factors confer power on some women and men at the expense of others (Steady 2002; Steady 1981; Imam et al 1997; Mohanty 1991; Sen and Grown 1986; Essed 1990). A multitude of African American scholars have critiqued feminist articulations of gender as it applies to their own situation, insisting that in the United States there is no way gender can be considered outside of race and class and feminists must theorize multiple forms of oppression wherever these exist in society (Oyewumi 2002). In other places, scholars critical of the prevailing western explanation of gender insist on the need to theorize the impact of imperialism, colonialism and other local and global forms of social stratification on women and men.

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[28] In the words of Mohanty (1991: p.58): "Sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be forged in concrete historical and political practice."

Within the African context, therefore, gender becomes a highly contested concept (Steady, 2002; p.3), subject to different interpretations within different contexts since the fundamental implication of power differentiation and subordination does not hold the same meaning in every African society and culture. For example, two Nigerian scholars, Ifi Amadiume (1987) and Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997) in their respective seminal works *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* and *The Invention of Women* have sought to demonstrate that the gender discourse of the West might not have any relevance at all to the Nigerian socio cultural context on the basis of the underlying assumptions and internal logic that drive western feminism.

We may conclude therefore that "the experiences of women [and men] are mediated by factors such as culture, religion, education, patriarchal ideology, level of democratic advance and… organisational capacity… in addressing gender inequality" (Sam Egwu, 2003: p. 1). Thus any gender analysis of women must recognize that "[w]omen's specific concerns are shaped by their social roles as daughters, wives and mothers, by the economic positions and obligations which they have within the family and the community, and by prevailing cultural conceptualizations of gender roles and relationships" (Sorenson, 1998: p. 3). These positions must never be considered givens.

2. 4 Gender, Conflict and Displacement

The governance of conflict, displacement and peace in the international system has traditionally been state centric and male dominated, ignoring the relative implications of these phenomena for various segments of national populations. In policy and practice, states practitioners and policy makers operated from a position of gender insensitivity –gender blindness- that was to have consequences for the relative survival of women and men in the affected countries. Consequently, the literature on conflict and forced migration gradually began to articulate these issues, lending credence by research and publications to the activist stance of human and women's rights advocates. Thus the evolution of a gender perspective in the study of forced migration has been the result of developments at the academic level, in international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, and in feminist advocacy.

Torres (2002) informs us that gender and forced migration (GAFM) as a field of academic study actually evolved within feminist theory, and specifically in relation to the field of gender and development (GAD). However, the progenitor of GAD was women in development (WID), developed in the 1970s by the liberal feminist school as an attempt at integrating women studies with the field of mainstream development in its quest at achieving

'equal' status for women within existing social and political structures. Similar objectives birthed the women in forced migration approach (WIFM) of the 1980s. However, WID soon made a transition to women and development (WAD), which emphasized helping women achieve self reliance from male domination and control of the factors of capitalist production.

These approaches however were not universal in scope and left women from the south dissatisfied, resulting in the founding of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, DAWN (Williams, 2003 in Egwu 2003). The Nairobi World Conference on Women of 1985 and the Beijing Conference of 1995 gave tremendous impetus to the women movement across the globe. These global efforts resulted in women from both the north and the south adopting the Gender and Development approach to respond to differing contexts of class, racial and gender inequalities (Williams 2003).

It was also at Beijing, the *Fourth World conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace*, that women's particular situation in armed conflict was brought to the centre of women's agenda for advancement with its inclusion in the Platform for Action as the fifth critical area of concern. The Beijing Platform for Action points out that although all sections of society are affected by armed conflict, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society (the social and cultural construction of gender) and their sex (unique biological characteristics). In the age of internal wars that spawn more civilian casualties than combat related casualties, women by the sheer numbers of their disproportionate involvement, have emerged as primary victims and actors in war and its aftermath especially.

Women and men experience conflict, displacement and post conflict differently. It is noted in the literature that different types of violence – political, economic, and social – coexist and overlap, and can be identified at four different levels – the individual, inter- personal, institutional, and structural (Moser and Clark 2001a). Violence and conflict erode levels of physical, human, natural, and social capital with differing effects on men and women (Moser 2001), and to portray women solely as victims denies them their agency. Other writers also warn against the kind of analyses that stereotype women in 'victim' roles in conflict. Judy El Bushra and Ibrahim Sahl (2005) observe that:

> There [is] growing evidence that attempts to link 'gender' and 'conflict' could
> generate gender stereotypes of women as passive victims, and men as

aggressive protectors of territory. It later became clear that women's experience of war, terrible though it is, goes far beyond the victim role: women are also promoters of and participants in war in many instances. Men also suffer gender violence in war, often of horrific proportions (Jacobs, Jacobson et al. 2000; Moser and Clark 2001b; Zarkov 2001).

Many authors agree that women's roles as victims in conflict situations are usually overemphasized to the detriment of other facets of their existence in such contexts. Tsjeard Bouta and Georg Frerks (2002) outline a conceptual framework for analyzing women in conflict and post conflict reconstruction that recognises seven roles of women: women as victims of (sexual) violence; women as combatants; women for peace in the non-governmental sector; women in formal peace politics; women as coping and surviving actors; women as household heads; women and (in) formal employment opportunities.

Although most military casualties are young men, and men make up 96 percent of the detainee population and 90 percent of the missing (ICRC 2001), violence against women (VAW) as well as other forms of gender based violence (GBV) is probably the most prominent feature of women in conflict. Chris Corrin (2004) tells us that in working with women and women's groups in Central and Southeastern Europe over 20 years, "one subject that recurs in many discussions and debates is violence against women. Linkages are made between women suffering violence in their own home and women being raped in war…. The extreme violence that women endure during conflict is not exclusively from war conditions but is directly related to the violence existing in women's everyday lives" (p. 5). What this means is that there is actually an unbroken continuum of violence experienced by women that originates in the home regardless of whether there is war or not, continues on into war time crimes against women, and extends even into the post conflict period. The findings of the UN Rapporteur on Violence Against Women corroborates this as it reveals "a continuum of violence from the public to the private space of homes. As male ex-combatants return home, their traumas and frustrations are often projected onto their wives and families."

To make matters worse in such [post war] contexts, the prevalence of arms among the civilian population and among armed groups, combines with the absence of both traditional and formal justice systems to make women extremely susceptible to GBV (Chhabra 2005; Bouta and Frerks 2002). This has been the case in places like Afghanistan and Kosovo. Chhabra (2005) notes studies that show an increase in domestic violence at the post conflict stage and also an increase in domestic violence involving weapons.

It would be wrong however to portray women as either passive victims of crimes of war, or as inherently desirous of peace, in contrast to men. Research by feminists in the North and South has challenged the so-called peaceful nature of women by highlighting women's involvement in national liberation struggles, their direct or indirect support of armed conflict by joining armed groups or providing resources and moral support, and various such contributions (El Jack 2003; Byrne 1996; Cockburn 2002; Moser and Clark 2001b; El Bushra 2000). Conversely, it would be erroneous to assume that men are never victims of war. El Jack (2002) calls attention to the fact that the increased number of households headed by women in conflict and post conflict periods is a strong illustration of men's specific vulnerability.

Displacement and/or forced migration during conflict may be seen as both a coping mechanism by women as well as a condition over which they had little choice. All the literature is agreed on the fact that women and children constitute the overwhelming number of either internally displaced or refugees during conflicts. When women flee to third countries and apply for asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention, they usually find it difficult to obtain refugee status on their own, unless as dependents on a male family member. Furthermore, 1951 Convention does not recognize sexual and gender based forms of persecution as grounds for asylum. What this has meant is that, according to Baines (2005b, p. 67), "despite the fact that most of the world's refugees were women and children, most of the world's resettled refugees were men."

In an even more dramatic scenario, in the 1990s, the case of the 'lost boys of Sudan' received quite a lot of media attention. In the late 1980s, thousands of boys and girls fled their homes in Sudan because of the fighting, and wandered around East Africa for years, with many dying on the way until they eventually reached the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya. After several more years of suffering in the camp, 4000 of the boys whose parents had either died or were missing got resettled in the United States. However, unfortunately, "no one highlighted the plight of the 'lost girls'. Among those who made it to Kenya there were several thousand girls aged 8 -10. Most of them were absorbed by foster families in the camp, with many becoming little more than unpaid servants. No one offered them resettlement" (Torres 2002).

In refugee camps, the peculiar difficulties of refugee women and girls are now well known. Oyinloye (2004) has studied these issues extensively, but we may summarize these

challenges here. They include lack of access to basic goods and services; healthcare and reproductive health care needs; limited access to education, employment and income generating programmes; physical safety; food security; increased domestic violence and other gender based forms of violence; disruption of families and home life; and so on.

Conflict and displacement are often cited as giving women added responsibilities as men go off to fight, or are killed, or become asylum seekers. Although this may be a good thing when it empowers women and teaches them new skills, sometimes, the consequences of such increased responsibilities impact negatively. This is because, for example, the added responsibilities women have in productive, reproductive and community work "are often transferred to younger girls and boys within the family. In particular, younger girls have to assume more responsibilities for caring for children, the elderly and the sick, along with managing burdensome domestic work, this shift in responsibility impacts on the welfare and future of female household members" (El Jack 2003, p. 15).

While displacement often disadvantages women, leaving them more vulnerable to gender based violence and creating new responsibilities and burdens for them, displacement may also benefit them as in when they are given priority in skills training and income generating programs. Also, while women find displacement more traumatic than men, they show greater flexibility in their adaptation to new environments, and in developing survival strategies. Men tend to expect assistance from formal institutions, and their skills are often not transferable (Chhabra 2005).

This became evident in a landmark study carried out by the Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development (ACORD) in five countries: Angola, Mali, Uganda, Somalia, and Sudan. The findings in all five countries consistently found that "insecurity reduces men's economic roles, while propelling women into greater economic activity" (El Bushra and Sahl 2005, p. 87). Most instructively, the effects of these on men were profound. Say El Bushra and Sahl (2005, p. 86):

> The second adaptation, which was also found consistently across the case studies, was that both men and women have made adjustments in their economic roles at the household level. On the one hand, the resources from which men once drew their power and status (e.g. land, animals, the labour power of women, youth and children) have now been denied them. The options which remain require them to accept menial employment, or worse still to accept dependence on their womenfolk. The result is that many men (seen most markedly in the cases of Angola and Somalia) experience deep

psychological distress at this threat to their masculinity, so much so that the research team was taken by surprise at the depth of their distress. While some men reluctantly – tearfully, even- accepted the role of house-husbands, taking on child care and other domestic tasks while their wives work, others could not bring themselves to do this, preferring idleness to this emasculation.

However, for women, all these negotiations do not necessarily translate to increased opportunities and empowerment in the post war period. When NGOs and well-meaning humanitarian agencies target women for assistance, the effect may be contrary to the intention of empowering them. El Bushra warns elsewhere (El Bushra 2000) that the advancement of women's interests 'at a superficial, women-focused level that fails to challenge overall paradigms of gender differences leaves women with new roles to fulfil but no institutional leverage to fulfil them effectively'. Thus Chris Corrin (2004, p. 12) advocates the "post-war creation (rather than reconstruction) of new institutional and societal formations" as a means of addressing gender inequities and extend gender awareness in policy making.

This is the real challenge for government, NGOs and other international agencies in the reintegration of returnee refugee women in post war states.

2. 5 Reintegration of repatriated/ returnee refugees

The discussion on reintegration in the literature seems to bear the same characteristics of the discussion on repatriation. This is evident in the fact that there remains the dichotomy between the views of institutional policy makers and the views of academics and activists. Also, the literature from the academic standpoint is somewhat scanty, and more often than not is based on program evaluations carried out or commissioned by relevant agencies in recent times. Both strands of the literature on reintegration of refugees are fairly recent. In the words of Alexandra Kaun (2008: 5-6),

> The literature on reconstruction, reintegration and returning refugee/IDP populations is very recent. What does exist can be divided into two branches: that of international organizations seeking to promote these processes, and scholars who are seeking to better understand it. At the intersection of academia and actual practice, reintegration specialists draw from both sides of the professional spectrum.

As much as possible, we shall continue to draw from both sides of the discussion for a fuller understanding of repatriation and reintegration in post war contexts.

The term 'reintegration' itself is used for various purposes, and this has tended to complicate its meaning for this study. In the discourse on post war contexts, reintegration is used equally to apply to ex-combatants as it is used for the situation of former refugees. Equally, the term 'returnee' is used to refer to several differing groups of people returning to a post war environment including refugees, IDPs, diasporas. In the Chambers Dictionary, reintegration is defined to mean 'to integrate again; to redintegrate; restoring to wholeness; restored; renewed.'

The UNHCR has taken a lead in shaping the meaning of reintegration among the various actors involved in the repatriation and reintegration of displaced persons and refugees. According to one UNHCR definition, reintegration is the process that enables former refugees and displaced persons to enjoy a progressively greater degree of physical, social, legal and material security (UNHCR 1998). According to the more recent *Handbook on Repatriation and Reintegration Activities* (UNHCR 2004), "Reintegration is a **process** that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties between returnees and their compatriots and the equal access of returnees to services, productive assets and opportunities" (emphasis in original text). In this process, the "end state" of reintegration is the universal enjoyment of full political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.

It seems the earlier definition of reintegration relied on a human security framework while the latter reformulation made recourse to human rights discourse. This probably depicts a move towards the more 'popular' human rights discourse to make refugee issues more open to the involvement of a greater multiplicity of actors and place refugee problems on the agenda of a more varied corps of donors and other multilateral and non-government entities. However, both human security and human rights theory are related and derive from liberal political theory.

2.5.1 Sustainability of reintegration

The above conceptualisation by UNHCR also relies on a depiction of an ideal 'end state' or 'result' of the reintegration process to define reintegration. In other words, reintegration must bear certain fruit for it to be judged successful or *sustainable* – either in terms of certain material or tangible dividends, or as in the above definitions, in the 'full' enjoyment of rights, responsibilities, and privileges. According to Joanna Macrae, reintegration is *sustainable* when returning refugees are able to secure (in reasonable time) the political, economic and social conditions needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity (Macrae, 1999). The move

towards defining reintegration in terms of sustainability or end results was borne of experience that necessitated UNHCR linking her activities in that sector with longer term development. It became understood over the years of promoting voluntary repatriation that repatriation was only a permanent 'return' , or a truly 'durable solution' if the conditions for refugees to stay were conducive.

Various authors have expounded on the conditions for a sustainable reintegration and return. John Rogge and Betsy Lippman (2004) assert that:

> The most successful return and reintegration processes have been those where 'pull' factors have been created in areas of origin through upgrading of basic services, creation of livelihood opportunities and, most importantly, the establishment of law and order. Returnees who have left their places of displacement because of 'push factors – such as acute discrimination or overt hostility by local authorities or populations – often require special assistance and protection in areas of displacement, during – and even after – return.

In other words, the refugees return because services and stability are restored, and so some of the reasons for their exile have been resolved and they would be more inclined to stay and reintegrate fully. However, whenever refugees leave their country of asylum simply because life there had become too harsh or difficult for them to bear, they may return to the country of origin, but the return may be temporary. They may only be biding their time until they are able to find another place to flee to or until they are able to access other durable solutions such as resettlement in a third country.

The presence of violence in the return environment is cached as proving a significant obstacle to reintegration by the authors of *Imagine Coexistence: Assessing refugee reintegration efforts in divided communities*. The work on coexistence specifically targets the social/community/psychological/psychosocial aspects of reintegration that determines the returnee's own decision to reintegrate. In this view, "countries with the most problematic return of refugees, where violence has occurred during the repatriation and reintegration processes, are most in need of coexistence work, but not until after the violence has been brought under control" (The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 2002). Refugees will not remain in their country of origin even after reintegration if there still remain threats to their life, livelihood and dignity.

Another area that must be addressed for reintegration to be sustainable is the need to incorporate long term objectives in agencies' short term relief and rehabilitation plans. The UNHCR (2004) observes that:

> For return and reintegration to be sustainable and displaced populations sufficiently protected, the planning and programming of rehabilitation and reconstruction processes must address their medium- and long-term needs systematically. It is necessary, therefore, to plan durable solutions operations for displaced populations in an integrated and comprehensive manner, rather than as separate components.

Consequently, the 4Rs approach was designed and introduced by the agency [in 2002 and 2003 in four pilot countries] to meet this critical need in the post war countries that refugees return to.

There is also evidence from countries such as Afghanistan and Angola to show that lack of safe land to accommodate the needs of both the returning displaced and the non-displaced is a significant obstacle to retarding or reversing return and sustainable reintegration (Bradley, n.d. p. 21). Similarly, restoring returnees' access to their own lands and houses that may have been occupied in their absence is also critical for the restoration of livelihood and for reintegration to take place. Bradley's literature review in the Forced Migration Online Research Guide also highlights some psychosocial issues that may preclude reintegration, as in cases where returnees return to communities where certain atrocities took place. Pollack (2003) corroborates the fact that return for these kind of refugees may not be permanent, but may rather be merely an occasion to reflect on the past and pay respect to the dead.

When reintegration is not sustainable, the most obvious and severe symptom is the return of 'returnees' to the former country of asylum or to another country for refuge. This phenomenon is referred to as *back-flows* (UNHCR 2004), and is an undesirable end of any repatriation movement.

There is, however, another way of interpreting the return of refugees to the country of asylum, as can be garnered from James Hathaway's (2006) discussion of refugee solutions in his article, "Refugee Solutions or Solutions to Refugeehood?" In this legal analysis of the Convention- based and 'rights-regarding' ways of terminating refuge status, Hathaway asserts that the refugee does not become a returnee until he or she is 're-established' in the country of origin. He posits that:

> Refugee status may come to an end if – but only if – the voluntary return amounts to reestablishment in the country of origin. Reestablishment is not the same as return or repatriation. Simply put, the refugee who returns only loses his or her refugee status once a durable, ongoing presence in the home country is established. Up to that point, she remains a refugee and is legally entitled to go back to the asylum country and to resume refugee protection there if things do not work out as hoped in the country of origin.

This argument is based on the 1951 Convention stipulation that, "The Convention shall cease to apply to any person falling under the terms of section A if . . . [h]e has voluntarily re-established himself in the country which he left or outside [of] which he remained owing to fear of persecution"[29].   This means that according to the most dominant refugee law instrument, the 1951 Convention, a person actually does not cease to be a refugee until he /she is re-established [reintegrated fully] into the country of origin, and does not desire to return to the country of asylum. In this mode of thinking, a person who goes back to the country of asylum after a period of return to the country of origin was never really a returnee; s/he never ceased to be a refugee. Therefore, back-flows may signal a failure of reintegration, but not a failure of international law to protect refugees from failed repatriation attempts. On the contrary, according to Hathaway (2006: p. 14) the international practice has negated the rights regarding spirit of the Refuge Convention, because: "refugees who choose to 'test the waters' by return to their country of origin find that they are deemed to have lost their status by reason of 'voluntary repatriation' even though the durability of stay required by the 'voluntary reestablishment' test has in no way been met."

The discussion on the role of aid in sustainable returnee reintegration appears to be split along the lines of actors like UNHCR that attempt to justify increased expenditure for reintegration activities over the years since the 1990s, and intellectuals who are critical of the role of aid in developmental objectives of post war countries. Jeff Crisp (2001), in his article, 'Mind the Gap! UNHCR, humanitarian assistance and the development process,' reiterates some of the arguments that have been put forward by UNHCR to justify its growing financial involvement in the reintegration of refugees. In a 1992 report to the Executive Committee of the UNHCR (UNHCR 1992), the High Commissioner stated that, "given the number of countries involved, the magnitude of the numbers [of refugees] returning and the fact that their successful reintegration is critical to any national reconciliation and reconstruction process, the issues are not simply humanitarian. International security is at stake." Similarly,

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[29] Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, done July 28, 1951, entered into force Apr. 22, 1954 (Refugee Convention), at Art. 1(C)(4).

a 1998 paper authored by the organisation (UNHCR 1998), claims that "there is a growing consensus that UNHCR can contribute to the prevention of refugee producing situation through its efforts to consolidate the durable solution of repatriation and reintegration in countries of origin, thereby reducing the risk that violence, armed conflict and population displacements will recur." In an even broader extension of its mandate, the same paper states that:

> The notion of reintegration cannot be restricted to returning refugees. When a civil war or communal conflict comes to an end, many other groups of people (some of whom may not be of direct concern to UNHCR) are also confronted with the task of rebuilding their lives and communities: displaced and war affected populations, demobilized soldiers and the victims of ethnic cleansing. The reintegration process must not only address the situation of these different groups, but must also promote peaceful and positive interactions between them, thereby contributing to the process of social and political reconciliation.

It is actually established in the literature and attested to by practitioners across the globe that development assistance is critical to the reintegration of refugees – "in a context in which assistance is given to the existing population as well as the returning refugees based on need" (Adelman 1998; Kuhlman 1994; Gorman 1994; Gorman 1993a, b, c; Gorman 1991). The caution usually raised, however, is that returnees should not be privileged in the aid they receive, compared to the 'stayee' population or other groups in society. This seems to be the substance of the latter UNHCR statement above.

On the other side of the debate, many scholars point out the negative influences of giving aid for returnee reintegration. *Prendergast's Second Law* (Adelman 1998: p. 6) states that third party support tends to undermine and even destroy the requisite local institutions that must be reinforced to facilitate reconciliation and in particular, allow the refugees to participate in their own rehabilitation. This means that sometimes [external] aid can immobilize persons in war affected areas and rob them of the initiative to create their own home grown solutions which may be longer lasting than externally imposed mandates and solutions.

In the final analysis however, it must be noted that it is the returnees themselves who can make the final decision about the sustainability of their reintegration *at the personal level*. The factors that may contribute to the decision to stay would most likely be psychosocial in nature, depending on the individual's own unique background, experience and family and social dynamics. One of the 'chief incentives' for refugees' return to the country of origin is to recover a sense of 'feeling at home' (Ghanem 2003: p. 36). Whenever that sense of 'home'

is absent, or expected socio-economic dividends are not attained, reintegration becomes uncertain. Laura Hammond (1994, 2004), who worked with Ethiopian returnees is also of the opinion that 'home' is more associated with community and circumstance than with a fixed geographical space. Liisa Malkki (1995) who studied Rwandan (Hutu) refugees in Tanzania also posited that refugees identify themselves based on certain socio personal identities such as gender, ethnicity, and age, and these are the factors that determine one's connection to a place, and eventually one's reintegration in the country of origin.

Interestingly, Alexandra Kaun (2008) takes this argument in an enlightening direction. In her 2006 study of Angolan returnees in four municipalities in the Moxico region of Angola (which lies along the easternmost border between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia, and is also the region of highest refugee returns in the country), she spotlights the role of institutional and individual factors in the process of reintegration. She observes that: "In the midst of practitioner and academic dialogue on reintegration, it is easy to ignore the perceptions of those actually experiencing it. How do war-affected persons define reintegration? Is there a word for it in the local language? If not, what can this tell us about the way in which people perceive displacement and emplacement?" (p. 2).

Therefore, based on the views of her research participants, she was able to come up with a classification of the factors both institutional and individual that the returnees' themselves say determine their reintegration. This is represented in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1 Returnee definitions of reintegration

Institutional aspects	Individual aspects
•meeting one's basic needs •regaining one's livelihood (cultivating, fishing, etc.) • physical reconstruction • schools • a good house • living without fear and harassment • freedom to travel • communication access	• good relationships with neighbours • peace (living together without problems) • uniting with family members • language

Source: Alexandra Kaun (2008) *When the displaced return: Challenges to 'reintegration' in Angola*, p.2.

These perceptions of reintegration by returnee respondents help us put the definitions advanced by other actors in perspective. This means that although there may be external/

objective referents of reintegration (such as freedom of movement, access to lands), there are also personal/objective markers that must be taken into consideration in any assessment of [the sustainability of] reintegration.

2.5.2 When does reintegration take place?

All the literature on reintegration relies on a partition of the stages of conflict into neat phases such as pre-conflict/conflict / post-conflict *or* pre-conflict/ conflict/ transition/ post-conflict/ reconstruction phases. Only a few scholars explicitly call these categorisations into question. The agencies and practitioners in the field must necessarily make these demarcations in order to define the start and end points of their mandates. However, these 'stages' cannot be taken as given, and it is necessary for us to acknowledge the fact that reintegration is not always necessarily a 'post-conflict' process; 'reintegration' often takes place in the midst of conflict or renewed conflict as well as in the transition and reconstruction phases.

According to the UNHCR (2004 p. 15), a good analysis of reintegration must take into cognizance the context within which the process evolves. For the agency, reintegration takes place in the transition stage, defined as "the period in a crisis when external assistance is most critical in supporting or underpinning still fragile cease-fires or peace processes by helping to create the conditions for political stability, security, justice and social equity" (UNDG/ ECHA 2004). Transitions, so defined, may be further split into the relief, transition and development phases; or into the early transition stage consisting relief and reintegration efforts, and a late transition phase consisting recovery and development efforts (UNHCR 2004, p. 18). Furthermore the agency's 4Rs approach outlines a progression from **r**elief to **r**eintegration to **r**ehabilitation and then to **r**econstruction (which would ultimately lead to development).

Jeff Crisp, of the UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service, and an expert on refugee issues, presents a stinging critique of the policies of donor states that birthed the conception of reintegration as occurring in states pronounced as 'post-conflict'. In a 1998 article, Crisp (1998) points out that,

> If donor states want to spend less on humanitarian relief; if they want to disengage from crisis-affected countries; if they want to suggest that the situation in those countries has 'normalized'; and if they want to impose the rigors of structural adjustment on the world's poorest and most devastated

countries, then what better way than to suggest that such states have entered a 'post-conflict' phase? (cf. Moore 2000).

In another paper, Crisp (2001) presents Macrae (1999)'s critique as follows:

> Rather than being in a 'post-conflict' situation, most of the countries which have experienced large scale repatriation movements in recent years are in the grip of chronic political emergencies. They are 'quasi-states', whose governments are 'deficient in the political will, institutional authority, and organized power to protect human rights or provide socio-economic welfare.'

Furthermore, from a post-structuralist and a gender perspective, even in the so-called 'post-conflict' phase certain segments of society continue to endure other, non- structural conflict such as domestic violence. Says Amani El Jack (2003):

> …The tendency to consider conflict and post conflict reconstruction as real, identifiable and autonomous stages creates a conceptual divide. What constitutes peace from a feminist perspective may differ from mainstream views because for many, particularly women, peace does not simply meant the end of the armed conflict, but a time to address the structural power imbalances that caused the conflict in the first place (p. 10).

Therefore, reintegration may take place in any of the scenarios depicted above, and post war society should not be perceived to be uni-directional or linear, nor should reintegration be charted as a point along a pre-determined continuum. As Cockburn and Zarkov (2002, p. 10) opine:

> …war can surely never be said to start and end at a clearly defined moment. Rather, it seems part of a continuum of conflict, expressed now in armed force, now in economic sanctions or political pressure. A time of supposed peace may later come to be called 'the pre-war period'…. A time of post war reconstruction, later, may be re-designated as an inter bellum – a mere pause between wars.

This position is especially apposite in the Liberian context that is under consideration in this research.

2.5. 3 Aspects or Facets of reintegration

The UNHCR *Handbook on Repatriation and Reintegration Activities* (2004) outlines in great detail the various dynamics of reintegration that exist and must be accounted for by agencies and practitioners working in the field. In particular, the *Handbook* outlines four facets of reintegration, based on its definition of reintegration as the enjoyment of economic, social and political rights. These facets of reintegration are:

o **Legal:** This refers to issues related to access to legal processes; legal support for ownership of property, land and housing;

- o **Political:** This aspect requires a stable government; full participation in political processes; gender equality in all aspects of political life; freedom of thought and expression; protection from persecution;

- o **Economic:** This involves access to productive resources (e.g. land, agricultural inputs and livestock); and

- o **Social:** This facet includes issues related to access to services; security; absence of discrimination; community-level dispute resolution, etc.

While this categorisation has not been explicitly challenged in the literature, empirical evidence exists to show that there are many more issues that form part of the repatriation and reintegration discourse. Also, many of the aspects of reintegration that pertain to returnee refugees do not fit very neatly or nicely into the above pre-determined categories, and intermingle, interlock and interweave the refugees' experience. The following section is a comparative discussion of reintegration in various places, and it highlights the limitations of the UNHCR classification.

2.5.4 Reintegration in Comparative Perspective

A survey of the literature presents first and foremost discussions about the various aspects of reintegration as defined above, but usually in negative terms. That is, the discussion is usually about the rights, privileges and benefits that are *not* being enjoyed by returnee refugees, rather than a discussion of the existing progress of reintegration.

Sperl and deVrise (2005) studied the repatriation and reintegration process in Sierra Leone and highlighted the progress from the emergency evacuation that started refugee return to the country, eventually culminating in the country being the first to pilot the Community Empowerment Programs (CEPs) of the UNHCR. The report indicated that with respect to repatriation and return, the UNHCR did not sufficiently address the needs of spontaneous returnees. Additionally, some of them were exposed to danger when crossing into the country through RUF – controlled areas due to misleading information that the UNHCR had created safe corridors which eventually did not exist. However, with respect to the reintegration program, the evaluators gathered that the UN system worked together in a "highly effective, flexible and mutually supportive manner" and the UN was able to list "effective coordination and collaboration" as the most important achievement of the previous years' activities. In one of the districts in the country, Kambia, nearly half of all the CEPs benefit women or women's associations. Unfortunately, though in most other parts of the country,

very few attempts appear to have been made to target CEPs consciously at communities housing clusters of vulnerable returnees such as orphans, widows or unaccompanied elderly persons, despite the fact that such cases are known to the Office. This means that the CEPs have not really lived up to the expectation of becoming, as stated in the Project Guidelines, 'the protection interface between UNHCR and people of concern in returnee areas' (Sperl and De Vrise 2005, p. 45).

In the Angolan case, 'spontaneous' return was also underlined as a significant challenge in the return process. Human Rights Watch (2003, p. 17) has documented some of the problems present during the spontaneous return of Angolan refugees including lack of security and basic infrastructure, extortion at crossing points, violence against women and girls, and the failure to provide identity documents for Angolan refugee children. In the study of reintegration in Angola carried out by Kaun (2008) "food security was one of the most pressing concerns expressed by respondents, all of whom had not yet had their first harvest and were in need of seeds and agricultural tools" (p. 13). Other problems cited in that region were the lack of employment and employment opportunities in the formal market economy; frustration with the lack of instruments to start their own businesses; poor infrastructure resulting in lack of access to trade and markets; lack of credit; long distances to sparsely equipped health posts; lack of access to and low quality of educational facilities; language barriers for young people who grew up in exile; the risk of landmines that were widely used during the war, and other personal security problems.

There is evidence to suggest that one of the core reintegration challenges in Burundi remains returnees' access to land. According to the Fifth Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Operations in Burundi to the Security Council in November 2005 (p. 7), "many internally displaced persons and refugees have returned to areas devastated by war, finding their homes destroyed and their land occupied, which often leads to disputes. The situation of women returnees, particularly widows, is further exacerbated by the lack of adequate legislation to address their inheritance and land access rights". The problem of access to land for returnees in that country is acute because:

> Burundi is one of the most densely populated countries in the world and disputes over land ownership and other social inequities have been at the core of the conflict in the country…. [S]uch conflicts are likely to intensify with the expected resettlement of large numbers of returnees in the coming months, and could be further exacerbated by declining land productivity combined with dramatic reductions in the size of cultivated areas available to each household (p. 12).

The problem remains unresolved to a large extent, as stated in a news item by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in August 2008. According to the news bulletin, it seems:

> The complex problem of land remains a major challenge to the reintegration of returnees. Not only do many, if not all returnees have a land-dispute related story to tell, but land has become a scarce commodity…. [A]n advisor of the administrator at the commune of Nyanzalac, said the number of returnees who have resettled was insignificant compared to the number of returnees who find their land occupied by others, 'either legally or illegally'. "Others (returnees) find that the government used them (their land) for social infrastructure; take the urban centre of Nyanzalac for instance, it was built on people's land…"(UNOCHA/ IRIN 2008).

In other cases, some returnees came back to find that their land had been sold and resold to multiple 'owners' in the long years of their absence, and thus reclaiming such land becomes nearly impossible. Further complicating matters, during the war, the then government encouraged people to occupy the vacant lands left by those who fled into exile. Some government and army officials were also allotted title deeds to houses and lands abandoned by those who left during the war, especially in the oil palm - rich southern regions (UNOCHA/ IRIN 2008). The land crisis is even more severe for the 'old caseload' returnee refugees, those who left the country as far back as 1972, thirty-five (35) years before.

Likewise, Rwanda has had to confront the problem of land in the reintegration of returnees because wherever land is a contributory factor to conflict, it must be perceived as a critical question in the reconstruction process. Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa, with the lowest ratio between people and arable land. It has a population growth rate of 3.1%, and population density has increased from 101 people per square kilometre in the early 1960s to 303 people per square kilometre today (2007 figures). In the last 50 years, the population of Rwanda has almost quadrupled.

Nonetheless, unlike the Burundi case, the Arusha Accord stipulated that refugees who had been out of the country for over ten years, and who returned to find their lands occupied could not legally reclaim such land (Bruce 2007, p. 9). The government was obligated under the Accord's Protocol on Repatriation to make land available for such people. It seems however, that within the general returnee population (and indeed the larger population) , groups such as orphans of HIV/AIDS, children of informal or illegal unions, offspring of men who died in the genocide, recently (2006) expelled Rwandese from Tanzania, and wives and daughters who have lost the male head of household – these groups have been identified as

being at the greatest risk of not having legal access to land in the current post war period (Bruce 2007; Rose 2005; Rose 2004).

In their own assessment of the UNHCR's coexistence project in Rwanda, the authors of *Imagine Coexistence: Assessing Returnee Reintegration Efforts in Divided Communities* note the role of the government in creating or not creating a sense of 'home' for returnees. The report informs us that: "In Umutara and Ruhengeri, Rwanda, people said they felt distanced from and discriminated against by the central authorities – a major coexistence challenge identified by the communities…. The government's suppression of any ethnically explicit language or affiliation is seemingly creating more tensions…and prevents dialogue on these issues…" (The Fletcher School, 2002, p. 20). It also found that the "potentially violent divisions" in the communities are not solely ethnic but could be attributed to several other "differences that mattered greatly" such as age, gender, social status, time of return, and place of asylum. This seems to corroborate Bruce (2007), Rose (2005) and Rose (2004) cited above.

Olaf Juergensen (2000, p. 21) observes that, unlike the ethnic tensions complicating post war reintegration in most other parts of Africa, the Mozambican civil war (which ended officially in 1992) was fought largely along military lines, without much direct civilian involvement. Furthermore, "The lack of a clear military victor in the conflict and the lack of any deep-rooted popular ideological basis/cause to the war made reintegration a relatively smooth affair" (p. 26). In spite of this, the challenges of reintegration for the returnees to the Northern provinces of Mozambique studied are similar to those elsewhere. These challenges include: inadequate number of trained medical personnel, lack of food, educational opportunities, water – with the added threat of landmines, which we are informed led to some casualties that were not numerous and "did not pose a significant threat" to transportation and agricultural activities.

Also, in Mozambique as elsewhere, when aid organisations relied on local government authorities to distribute food and non-food items, there was significant marginalisation of a particular section of the population, in this case, the RENAMO-controlled areas. Even in the government's reconstruction efforts this marginalisation was evident as in the following examples:

> …personnel at five of the 10 traditional health posts located in Renamo controlled territory had received some minor training and medications, while the health infrastructure had been rehabilitated at all the health centres in

government-controlled areas. In the areas of education and water the situation was worse: of the 21 schools and 35 water projects rehabilitated or constructed in Angonia by this time, none were in the Renamo strongholds in the central and western part of the district (Juergensen 2000, p. 25).

Sarah Gammage and Jorge Fernandez (2000) conducted research on the economic consequences of conflict, refugee flight and displacement for households in El Salvador. Their study adds a couple of startling findings to what we already know about reintegration. In the first place they discovered that their findings "appear to indicate that… the lack of physical, human and possibly social capital… predispose the concentrated displaced[30] to poverty and may affect their ability to reintegrate and benefit from peace in the post-war era" (p. 18). In other words, those returnees who had been encamped had displayed a greater propensity to be unable to reintegrate for the reasons suggested above. Secondly, the El Salvador study found out that that "female-headed and female-maintained households displaced by war are disproportionately likely to be poor, both because of their displacement and because of the gendered nature of their exclusion from decision-making fora, markets and productive opportunities" (p. 19). This confirms the literature that exists and opines that women are disadvantaged in reintegration after displacement.

The link between returnee refugee reintegration and access to land and other productive resources is demonstrated elsewhere outside the African continent, in the Asian country of Laos. The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is situated at the intersection of Southeast Asia's major trade routes connecting its larger and economically more powerful neighbours China, Thailand, and Vietnam. Laos has a population of 4.5 million people, approximately 85% of whom are engaged in subsistence agricultural production, with only about 10% of household production being marketed (Ballard 2003; World Bank 1992). Repatriation of political refugees who fled in 1975 was completed in December 2001, although the majority of refugees that went into exile had been resettled in various western countries. In the reintegration era, "social relationships in the form of status and influence played a significant role in the distribution and acquisition of land… [and also] in providing certain households with access to cash incomes from nearby relatives or those residing

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[30] Gammage and Fernandez (2000, p. 1) make a distinction between the concentrated displaced and the dispersed displaced, based on an earlier study by Segundo Montes (1989, 1985). The concentrated displaced refers to
those individuals and households that have fled armed conflict seeking refuge in encampments either inside El Salvador or beyond its national boundaries. The dispersed displaced describes those who have fled the conflict and sought refuge wherever they were able to do so and largely without receiving aid or support through state and international agencies.

abroad." Therefore, in this case, "social capital" and "political capital" were very important factors in determining access to scarce resources (Ballard 2003, p. 17).

Put in another way, community level governance is critical in reintegration:

> The role that governance plays in this process should not be overlooked. The fact that the Lao government's local land administration was exceptionally weak in terms of human and financial resources meant that people in Ban Pha Thao and the nearby villages were more or less left to their own devices in terms of distributing the land and then enforcing land claims. In the absence of formal mechanisms and procedures (e.g., land titles), the governance of property rights fell on traditional institutions that placed a considerable degree of power in the hands of community and clan leaders (Ballard 2003, p. 22).

This very sentiment is also expressed in a research paper by the University of the Saar (1992) in which the authors describe West Germany's experience of reintegration of refugees after 1945, and the possible lessons for African and other contemporary refugee situations. The paper posits that when the regulation of ownership and use of farmland takes place outside the public legislature by local authorities, the possibilities of public (read government) institutions to intervene in these issues then become severely limited, particularly, when such land has been reassigned to local and political authorities (as in Burundi).

According to Megan Bradley (2005), returnees' right to restitution (return of, or compensation for land and property owned by them) has been incorporated into peace agreements in Tajikistan, Georgia, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Cambodia, Guatemala, and the former Yugoslavia. Unfortunately though, such restitution for returnees is usually as "unavailable in practice as it is unassailable in principle" (Dowty 1994). This reality is usually due to structural factors such as cost implications for the state, and theoretical limitations of the concept of post war restitution.

Beyond property restitution, though, other efforts must be made in the post war period to address other injustices that the war might have introduced to society. Bradley (2005) who advocates truth and justice commissions as part of the reintegration and reconciliation process for returnees highlights the Bosnian situation:

> The Bosnian experience affirms that restitution alone cannot achieve just conditions of return. Although restitution promotes economic security and reconciliation in the long run, in the short term it must be supplemented by concerted efforts to uphold returnees' physical security, such as through the use of the International Police Force. It is essential to address security, property restitution, return, and accountability for human rights violations in

an interconnected manner, with a view to promoting reconciliation between returnees, their home communities, and the state (p. 24).

Pederson (2003) explores from an anthropological point of view the process of "emplacement" that occurs when migrants returned in the post war period in Lebanon. That is, the way they negotiate the meanings of 'home' and 'place' in the reintegration process. They face challenges of rebuilding their everyday life, coping with the deteriorated conditions of life in Lebanon, and according to Hammond (2000), clarifying practical matters about how to make life in a particular place possible. The returnee respondents for Pederson's study emphasized the psychological difficulties of adjusting to life in a new place irrespective of it being a new country, or a new town in the former country. Most interestingly, the Lebanon study indicates that for many returnees the primary considerations regarding return focused on living conditions rather than on questions of identity and belonging. These last issues gain most importance in the lives of returnees for whom a material base is well established (Pederson 2003, p. 30). This highlights for us the role that returnees' relative financial and social status can influence their views of their own and others' reintegration.

The experiences of the countries discussed above underscore the multi-faceted nature of post war reintegration of returnees all over the world. There are economic, social, legal, political, psychosocial and psychological aspects of reintegration that exist inter-connectedly and determine the returnees' ability to experience a "progressively greater degree of …security."

2.6 Governance

2.6.1 Defining 'Governance'

There is probably no term more fluid than 'governance' in today's social science discourse, save democracy maybe. This reality is even more complicated by the varied uses and definitions ascribed by various academic disciplines, schools of thought and organisations. According to one sceptic, the various definitions advanced for governance implies that the entire field of Political Science is about governance.

The word *governance* derives from the Greek verb κυβερνάω [*kubernáo*] which means *to steer* and was used for the first time in a metaphorical sense by Plato. It then passed on to Latin and then on to many languages (European Commission, n. d.). According to Tim Plumptere, Founder of the Institute on Governance, "governance" was almost unknown in the

English language until the last few years of the twentieth century. This makes the term a fairly recent addition not only to the English language but to intellectual discourse. This probably explains why various entities seek to define the term to fit their own purposes.

In Political Science, the term is identified as being intimately linked with the field of 'new public administration' which came to the fore in the 1990s in the United States, and can also be found in theories of comparative politics and international relations (see Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Hewson and Sinclair 1999). Governance theory is closely related to institutional theory, systems theory, policy network theory and organizational field theory (Garson 2006). Governance theory in political science and public administration also drew on governance theory in the corporate and non-profit sectors (cf. Fishel 2003; Jensen 2000), and on theories of multi-level governance developed by authors from the European Union (Smith-Hillman 2006). According to Garson (2006), "today, 'governance theory' is a broad umbrella, covering almost any non-hierarchical mode of policy formulation exercised by formal governmental bodies interacting with each other and with organisations in civil society."

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has done much to define governance for contemporary practitioners, as it was very involved in governance initiatives in conflict affected countries and 'complex emergencies' from the mid 1980s on. UNDP (1999, p.15) defines governance as:

> the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. Governance comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. UNDP defines "good governance" as governance that is effective, participatory, transparent, accountable, and equitable and promotes the rule of law.

What is significant about this definition is that,

> Particularly important in the context of countries in special circumstances, is the fact that *UNDP's definition of governance encompasses not just the state, but the private sector and civil society as well* All three are viewed as critical for sustainable human development. The role of the state is viewed as that of creating a stable political and legal environment conducive to sustained development, while civil society institutions and organisations are viewed as a means of "facilitating political and social interaction and mobilising groups to participate in economic, social and political activities." (UNDP 1999, p. 15, emphasis mine. Cf UNDP 1997a, UNDP 1997b).

Furthermore the above definition highlights six principles of good governance that can lay claim to universal recognition as they appear in much of the literature. These are

effectiveness, participation, transparency, accountability, equity and promotion of the rule of law. Elsewhere (UNDP 1997b), eight characteristics of good governance are explicitly identified: participation, consensus oriented, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency, equity and rule of law.

In terms similar to the UNDP's conceptualisation, governance has also been defined as

> [comprising all] the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how citizens are given a voice, and how decisions are made on issues of public concern…. [It] is a process whereby societies or organisations make their important decisions, determine whom they involve in the process, and how they render account (Institute on Governance, 2003: ii, 1).

The actual working definition of governance used by the Institute on Governance is similar to the above:

> Governance is the art of steering societies and organizations. Governance occurs through interactions among structures, processes, and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say. Governance is about power, relationships, and accountability: who has influence, who decides, and how decision-makers are held accountable (Plumptre 1999: 3; Schacter 2000:3).

This definition is instructive in that it also sees governance as involving both formal structures and informal processes that determine the direction and decision-making in societies. It also highlights the fact that governance is about the *steering* of decision making, and has to do with direction setting in society.

The UNDP's definition has been criticized as including nearly every possible individual, organization or non-organized group in a country, and as being too normative to be analytically relevant (Gibson n. d.).

For the World Bank, ideas of governance and good governance are slightly different from those discussed above. According to the World Bank (1994, 1992), good governance "is epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy-making, a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos acting in furtherance of the public good, the rule of law, transparent processes, and a strong civil society participating in public affairs." The Bank further defines it as the "manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development". This governance has three distinct aspects: (i) the form of political regime, (ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of country's economic and social resources; and (iii) the capacity of the government to design, formulate, and implement policies and programmes and discharge its functions.

This formulation emphasizes the role of formal, bureaucratic and public institutions in the process of decision making, and pays little attention to the equally valid and relevant activities of non-government, non- public institutions in the political order of a country.

It is important here to make a distinction between 'governance' and 'government'. While government is involved in governance, governance may take place without government. In the field of politics, governance is associated with aspects of new public administration, comparative politics and international relations that emphasize the transformation of institutional/hierarchical processes of policy implementation. We may also attempt to distinguish between 'governance' and 'governing'. According to Clark Gibson (n. d.) in his deconstruction of the term 'governance', the British Council believes governance is not governing, but a "broader" notion that involves interaction between the formal institutions and those in civil society; it refers to a process whereby "elements in society wield power, authority and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and social upliftment".

In particular, we may identify specific areas of social and political activity to which the term 'governance' may be correctly applied. These are:

o Governance in 'global space', or global governance, deals with issues outside the purview of individual governments.

o Governance in 'national space', i.e. within a country: this is sometimes understood as the exclusive preserve of govern*ment*, of which there may be several levels: national, provincial or state, indigenous, urban or local. However, govern*ance* is concerned with how other actors, such as civil society organizations, may play a role in taking decisions on matters of public concern.

o Organizational governance (governance in 'organization space'): this comprises the activities of organizations that are usually accountable to a board of directors. Some will be privately owned and operated, e.g. business corporations. Others may be publicly owned, e.g. hospitals, schools, government corporations, etc.

o Community governance (governance in 'community space'): this includes activities at a local level where the organizing body may not assume a legal form and where there may not be a formally constituted governing board (Institute of Governance, 2003: pp 2 – 3).

Other authors refer to 'corporate governance' (comparable to the notion of governance in organisational space), 'multi-level governance', 'project governance' and 'information technology or internet governance'.

2.6.2 'Post Conflict Governance' or 'Governance in post – conflict states'?

The literature surveyed for this research often refers to 'post conflict governance' and 'governance in post conflict states' within different but related contexts. While the meaning of governance is taken for granted in many of these texts, the discussion of issues makes reference to a wide range of government and non-government activity. *Post conflict governance* is usually perceived in terms of the array of actors, activities, policies and decisions that shape the post war reality in any given context. This may include government, NGO, multilateral and bilateral actors and agreements, local organisations and informal groups, as well as traditional institutions and individuals who participate in any of these. On the other hand, *governance in post conflict* almost exclusively refers to the government's, or a specific organisation's activities and decision-making in a post war state, and whom it involves in the process. However, both terms will be used interchangeably here to refer to governance processes and the vast array of actors that participate in them in post conflict environments.

2.6.3 Reintegration and post conflict governance

Since the literature on reintegration and post conflict governance tends to be separate, little attempt has been made to rigorously link the two processes. However, some authors have drawn attention to the connection between sustainable reintegration of refugees and indeed the entire war affected population, and the quality of governance in post war settings. Achieving sustainable reintegration, indeed achieving a sustainable peace, is inextricably linked with the quality of governance obtainable in post conflict situations. As the authors of the path-breaking book by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (I-IDEA) put it: "Those wishing to build a sustainable settlement to a conflict have often overlooked the importance of making appropriate institutional choices about systems of governance….Democratic governance is key to developing sustainable settlements" (International IDEA, 1998: 16, 31). This means then that the essential key to sustainable reintegration of refugees, and the essential link between sustainable reintegration and sustainable peace in post conflict situations is good governance.

In an issue of the German development journal *Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit* (Salomon 2002), the Afghan administrator of the Khost provincial school district, described the following situation that demonstrates the intersections between post conflict governance and the reintegration of post war returnees:

> Farmers can't sell their produce, because international organizations distribute wheat and legumes for free. There are no school buildings, and the children sit in the open, often under the broiling sun. We have no teaching materials. There are very few trained teachers left, mainly elderly men. We'd like to build schools in every village, which could also serve as community centres. We'd like to have busses, so we can bring children from remote hamlets to the schools. We'd like to have drinking water in the schools, but water levels in the wells have gone down, and we have no pumps. We'd like to teach girls, and parents are insisting that we do, but we lack female teachers. We have no money to pay our teachers. The money pledged by the donor community in Tokyo, and specifically the money placed in trust with the United Nations to pay salaries, has never trickled down to our province, and anyway, there are no functioning banks to transfer money. Security is poor, but the American troops are a help. The only material assistance thus far – several months after the international community landed in Kabul – has come from a small German NGO.

This quote highlights many of the issues described in previous sections of this study as reintegration challenges, and particularly the governance dimensions of these. In the words of Dirk Salomon (2002), these are:

> …the gap between pledges of aid and their delivery, the unintended consequences of humanitarian interventions, the lack of local capacity, the shortages in building materials and means of transportation, the damaged transportation infrastructure, lack of access to clean drinking water, and the gaps in food production and health care. Add to this the widespread concerns with security, compounded by small arms in the hands of unemployed goons, and then imagine the psychosocial damage done by internal conflict…. The overall composite picture is one of utter disarray.

This example shows the way in which the international, national, local and community aspects of governance converge to affect reintegration of post war returnees.

While governance may take place at any level Adelman (n. d.) identifies the importance of the political, legal and economic regime planned to be in place after a war as being critical to the ability of government to facilitate the repatriation and reintegration of returning refugees. In the post war context, there are also a number of actors who participate in post conflict governance. Adelman (n.d. p. 7) mentions the types of actors that are concerned with refuges in this context: refugee organisations representing or claiming to represent the refugees; humanitarian agencies; international agencies particularly those with a prime concern with

refugees (UNHCR for example); states particularly the states in which the refugees have found refuge, and the state from which the refugees have fled; and military security services, peacekeepers, local military and gendarmes and security employed by NGOs and international agencies.

Especially in the immediate post war environment, these groups of actors create the post conflict governance scenario. However, "within and among these groups, there are many debates on how to cooperate and create coherent action…but the inability to effect such a coherence has had drastic effects on the security and welfare of the refugees…" (Adelman n. d. p. 8). Further, Stein (1997, p. 155) observes that development assistance has been "less successful in promoting effective collaboration between themselves." This problem of cooperation and coordination is worthy of note as there are sometimes hundreds of identifiable actors working in post conflict, with different priorities, mandates, values, modes of operation and donor constituencies to which they are accountable (cf. Adelman n. d.). Bradley (n.d. pp. 11-12) also points out that the transition from emergency relief to long term development is one task "which no one agency alone is equipped to carry out. Lack of coordination and communication between these actors often leads to the inefficient distribution of limited resources and the paralysis of national institutions intended to uphold the rights of returnees". And in its analysis and evaluation of the coexistence project initiated by UNHCR in divided post war communities, the Fletcher School observed that "the implementing partners were the most crucial element in the success of the coexistence work….It was the single most important decision taken by the UNHCR field staff in launching this initiative" (the Fletcher School 2002, p. 14).

A further governance issue that arises in the reintegration regime is the question of who should benefit from reintegration assistance. In a post war setting, the overwhelming majority of the survivors of the conflict are poor and lack access to basic services. In such a context, aid assistance given to returnee refugees alone is perceived as untenable and even unconscionable. In this school of thought, the priority given to returnees over former IDPs or stayees affects the larger goals of reintegration and reconstruction (Kaun 2008, pp. 28-29). More precisely, "although one could argue that reconstruction assistance such as hospitals and schools benefits the entire population, this support does not compare to a year of food rations, or the distribution of seeds, tools and other household goods which are part of official assistance packages for returnees" (Kaun 2008, p. 29).

The Human Rights Watch report on return and reintegration in Angola (Human Rights Watch 2003) also emphasizes the fact that reintegration assistance should not be disbursed only to identified returnees in isolation of the community to which they return: "Receiving communities should not be left to bear the cost of the reintegration and reconciliation process on their own. They too need special attention especially given their exposure to landmines; lack of public and social services…."

Similarly, many reintegration programs do not cater to the needs of spontaneous returnees (Human Rights Watch 2003). These are persons who do not register with the UNHCR for transportation back to the country of origin and thus upon their return in most cases do not qualify to receive the assistance package given to identified (registered) returnee refugees. The Human Rights Watch report cited above also identified situation in which returnee refugees themselves have been "prevented" from receiving assistance due to the lack of access (p. 19).

The return process itself may present governance challenges because of the exclusion of refugees from the decision making process. Bradley (n.d.) who did a review of the literature on return and reintegration for the Forced Migration Online Research Guides, notes that "the few studies that have been completed on tripartite agreements have taken a critical stance, arguing that these agreements are based primarily on the political will of donors, host countries and countries of asylum, rather than on the expressed interests of refugees" (p. 9). The exception in the literature is the case of Guatemalan refugees in México who participated in decision making about their return by organising themselves into Permanent Commissions and became influential actors in the national peace process (p. 13).

Upon the return of the refugees, the question of their involvement in the reintegration processes still subsists. Both returnees and the people in the communities should be actively engaged in their own rehabilitation, but this is not often the case. In this vein, Rogge and Lippman (2004, p. 5) argue that "facilitating inclusive, representative participation by the community in defining and prioritizing its needs and implementing and evaluating projects based on these needs can affect both the sustainability of the interventions but just as importantly social cohesion…." Thus, Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs) were introduced by the UNHCR in 2003 as a community based approach to reintegration that is planned, implemented and managed by returnees themselves, drawing on funds from UNHCR.

Sometimes however, it is the government itself that is absent from the reintegration process. Alexandra Kaun points out in her study of returnees in Angola that one of the most troubling aspects of reintegration there is the physical and visible distance of the government and government officials from the major returnee areas that her study focused on: "Government officials tend to appear only at either the inaugurations of bridges and schools built by NGOs, or during political campaign visits. This lack of presence is…noticeable to residents…" (Kaun 2008, p. 33). Other significant absences of the government are symptomized in the absence of police, lack of infrastructure, lack of a viable judicial system, and other related deficiencies that create a vacuum in the governance of post war societies.

The issues discussed above illustrate the centrality of governance issues to post war reintegration of refugees.

2.7 A summary of approaches to the study from the literature

In conclusion, a critical scrutiny of existing discourse on the reintegration of refugee women reveals areas for possible improvement. There is the women- as- victims approach, or what Skjelbaek (1995) calls the problem-oriented approach, which emphasizes the difficulties women face and advocates solutions that have to do with treating women as especially vulnerable members of the general population. Whilst this approach has the decided value of helping to reduce discrimination against women in the planning and implementation of programs, it also tends to minimize the role of women in engineering solutions to their own problems, and in constructing the new post war order.

Many other studies also adopt a women's studies perspective that fails to factor in the social construction of gender difference and gender role which have consequences for effective reintegration of returnees. Refugee-centrist or humanitarianist approaches are also of limited utility in aiding understanding of returnee situations as they tend to ignore to a large extent the political and structural environments which initiated displacement and remain potent for destabilizing the reintegration process. Other approaches tend to be materialistic, emphasizing the material aspects of reintegration and post war rehabilitation and reconstruction, thereby minimizing the significant influence other political, social, psychological and cultural factors play in successful reintegration of refugees.

There are also many authors, especially advocacy-based individuals or organisations that rely on a human rights based framework. Relatedly, some others (for example, Kaun 2008) employ a human security framework that factors in modern theories of human development.

These writers have the added advantage of presenting their data from the perspective of the research subjects (returnees, refugees, women, etc.) and thereby deviating from institutionalist representations of refugee reality. Schaffer (n. d.) also makes a review of what she called 'macro' approaches, including political economy and structuralist approaches, and 'micro' approaches that are 'individualist'.

And, finally, there is the 4Rs approach currently guiding the activities of the UNHCR and related humanitarian agencies which attempts to link repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Though very useful for realizing the development potentials of returning populations (and for accessing aid for executing returnee reintegration programs) this approach projects a linear model which might not be dynamic enough for analyzing such complex situations as that of Liberia. This study attempts to address these apparent gaps in the discourse on refugee reintegration.

2.8 Theoretical Framework: *Towards an Integrated Gender Analytic Framework*

Although acknowledging the relative utility of each of the approaches to studying returnee refugees and women in post conflict situations discernible in the literature, this effort will favour a combination of frameworks to refine its specific argument. The goal here is to adopt a method that not only builds on the strengths and weaknesses of previous approaches, but that also contributes in new and meaningful ways to our understanding of refugee reality.

Based on the review of the feminist, gender and refugee literature, this research will adopt an integrated gender framework. This approach moves beyond the women in forced migration approach to address *gendered* dimensions of refugee reintegration which perceives gender as the sum of the relations between the identities, roles and behaviour of women and men (Torres, 2003; El Jack, 2003; Giddens, 2001; Diaz, 2001; Sorenson, op cit). In other words, while addressing the specific challenges of women returnees, a gendered analysis attempts to understand not just the differences between the genders but also the constant construction and contestation of gender roles in post conflict societies.

Essentially then, this approach is constructivist, that is, it sees gender difference and gender roles as being historically and culturally specific, and as being in a constant state of flux, shifting according to socially determined structures and actions. This perspective places the individual actor within appropriate social, political and economic contexts in understanding her/his situation at any given point in time (Butler, 1999; Faludi, 1999; Skjelbaek 1995; Remigio 2001; UNHCR 2003).

In terms of governance, this kind of gender analysis recognises that 'in any given society, gender shapes the definitions of acceptable responsibilities and functions for men and women in terms of "social and economic activities, access to resources, and decision-making authority." ' (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004: 8; World Bank, 2003)

Furthermore in this vein, this integrated approach recognizes the role of women as social actors, as individuals possessing agency to act to influence or construct the world around them. Therefore this approach brings to the fore the hitherto largely unacknowledged substantial contributions of women to the post war reconstruction of their societies.

This gendered analysis also moves beyond a universalistic conception of women's experiences. Feminist thinking influenced by post-modern theory[31] has sought to demonstrate that both 'women' 'girls' 'men' 'boys' and 'refugees' or 'returnees' as social categories do not have completely common characteristics which would label them each as a homogenous subset of society. Rather, an understanding of women and female returnees will benefit from recognition of other factors such as age, experience, ethnicity, region, education which crosscut and intermingle with gender identity. Thus, women's experience in post conflict Liberia will be influenced by the diversity and specificities of their exile experience and other givens of their social identities.

The salient aspects of this approach are summarized in Figure 1 below. The figure depicts a non-directional circle that links the various aspects of the theoretical framework into an integrated whole.

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[31] Especially relevant in this instance are feminist theories of intersectionality, and post-strutural feminism.

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │ Gender is the│
                    │ sum of       │
                    │ relations    │
                    │ between men  │
                    │ and women    │
                    └──────────────┘
   ┌──────────────┐                    ┌──────────────┐
   │ Women,       │                    │ Gender is    │
   │ returnees are│                    │ context -    │
   │ non-homogenous│                   │ specific     │
   │ categories   │                    │              │
   └──────────────┘                    └──────────────┘

   ┌──────────────┐                    ┌──────────────┐
   │ Women are    │                    │ 'Gender' is  │
   │ social actors│                    │ constantly in│
   │              │                    │ flux         │
   └──────────────┘                    └──────────────┘
                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │ Gender shapes│
                    │ governance   │
                    │ roles,       │
                    │ resources,   │
                    │ decision     │
                    │ making       │
                    └──────────────┘
```
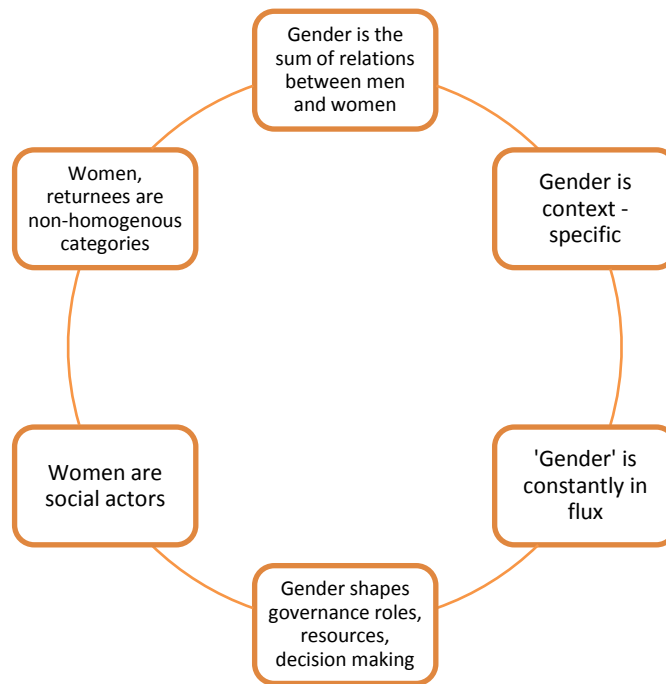
Figure 1: The Integrated gender analytical framework

Finally, such an integrated gender theory of returnee women's reintegration will contribute to the need for post war data that is gender specific, and has utility for comparative analysis that can aid deeper general understanding and contribute to the achievement of a sustainable reintegration.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The preceding chapters outlined the structure and theoretical bases for this research work, including an exploration of the relevant literature. This chapter describes the methods and means employed by the researcher towards achieving the set objectives of this research and answering the research questions raised at the beginning of the study. This chapter includes: a description of the study area in terms of factors relevant to field collection of data; the research design; data sources and how they relate to the research objectives; study population; sampling procedures and techniques; data collection methods; data collection instruments; validity and reliability of the data collection instruments and methods; the methods of data analysis; limitations of the study; and ethical considerations in the research process.

3.1 Description of study area

Liberia lies on the western coast of Africa, bounded on the west by Sierra Leone, on the East by Cote d'Ivoire, on the north by Guinea, and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean. The country covers 111, 370 square kilometres, made up of heavily forested mountainous territory in the inland and evergreen rain forests in the south. The climate is described as sub-equatorial with heavy rainy seasons between June and August and again between October and November. According to July 2004 population estimates 3,482,211 persons currently live in Liberia, with 95 percent of this made up of numerous indigenous ethnic groups[32], 2.5 percent Americo- Liberians (descendants of freed immigrant American slaves) and 2.5 percent Congo people (descendants of former Caribbean slaves).

In the aftermath of the peace deal that was brokered in Liberia in 2003 by the international community, elections have been successfully conducted and a new government inaugurated. Furthermore, according to the UNHCR, an estimated 200,000 refugees have returned to the country since then, with an approximate 190,000 yet to return or access other durable solutions (UNHCR News Stories, 16 January 2006).

However, the physical and psychological position of returnees will depend partly upon the area to which they return. The country is divided into fifteen administrative counties namely,

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[32] These ethnic groups include the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai, Bella, Mandingo, Dann, Sapo, and other smaller groups.

Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, Mariland, Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess, River Gea and Sinoe – all of which are further subdivided into administrative districts[33]. The capital, Monrovia, has virtually no running water or electricity, and residents depend on the charity or enterprise of (wealthier) neighbours who have generating sets or borehole taps. Unemployment is reported to be 80% high. However, the situation in the other parts of the country is much worse as the capital is the hub of virtually all economic and political activities. One major road- which is in severe disrepair- links the capital with the interior, with Gbarnga in Bong County specifically, while another links the south-western counties of Bomi and Grand Cape Mount with Monrovia. In the rainy season most parts of the country are virtually cut off from the capital due to the terrible state of the roads which become rivers of mud and are impassable.

The border counties of Lofa in the northwest, and Bong and Nimba in the North, are probably the most war ravaged areas of the country as they were at various times either rebel headquarters and/or the specific target of government controlled forces (see IRIN/UNOCHA, 2005). However, records indicate that most refugees return to border areas and the capital, with Lofa, Mariland and Montserrado counties recording the highest number of returnees so far (UNHCR, 2005b; LRRRC Activities Update 13 September 2006).

These various factors in the research field impinged on this study in one measure or the other. The research areas visited included border and hinterland, urban and rural, township and suburban and diverse types of locations, and attempted to include subjects representative of variations in age, education/skills training, ethnicity, reason for and length of displacement, and family support (as indicated in research question #3).

3.2 Research Design

The central aim of this study was to examine the various gendered aspects of the governance of refugee reintegration in post war Liberia, and determine the possible implications of these for the returnees themselves and for the consolidation of the peace processes in that country.

Therefore, the research was exploratory as it investigated little known aspects of returnee refugee reintegration in post war Liberia. According to Singleton et al (1988: pp. 90, 89), exploratory studies are undertaken when relatively little is known about something, either

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[33] As depicted in Map of Liberia and Camps as of 11 Dec 2000, www.reliefweb.int/mapc/afr_wst/cnt/lib.pdf. Refer also to the map of Liberia in the preliminary pages of this thesis.

because of its deviant character, or because of its newness and the researcher's aim is to explore the phenomenon in order to become familiar with it and gain further insight about it (cf. Manheim and Rich, 1995: p. 85).

This research has privileged a feminist methodology, relying heavily on qualitative methods and a multi-vocal analysis that pays particular attention to the voices of the researched themselves in drawing conclusions. On feminist methods, Erin K. Baines (2005a, p. 146) posits that feminist methods "potentially provide more context-rich analysis by situating research subjects in their everyday lives and collecting data that specifically seeks to reflect the participant's perspectives." By this, women are "not objects of study, but subjects, authorities of knowledge" (Baines 2005a, p. 145). On qualitative methods, Sambo (2005, p. 194) opines that "the purpose of qualitative research is gaining deeper insight of the subjects under investigation. It is therefore impossible to study large samples [as] the method of analyzing qualitative data is time consuming and consequently expensive." And Bolanle Adetoun (2005, p. 50) comments on the relevance of a multi-vocal text in reference to marginalised research subjects: "The work of a researcher in this type of project is to listen to [and present] all parties concerned" (Adetoun 2005: 50).

The above justifications describe very well the over-aching intent of the methodology employed in this study. The following subsections elaborate the procedures relevant to this design.

3.3 Data Sources and Research Objectives

This research employed two main sources of data in pursuing its objectives- primary and secondary sources.

(i) Primary sources of data included

a) returnee refugees, female and male
b) family heads,
c) community leaders such as tribal chiefs and youth leaders,
d) government agencies and officials from the Liberia Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement commission (LRRRC), the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD), Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Liberia National Police (LNP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) ;

e) staff of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or community based organisations (CBOs) such as the Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET), , the Voinjama District Development Committee, the Voinjama District Women Organization for Peace and Development (VODWOPEDE);

f) staff of international governmental and non-governmental organisations working with returnees e.g. UNHCR, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA);

g) some stayees;

h) various other members of civil society, such as clergymen; and

i) other persons or agencies with knowledge of, or responsibility for various aspects of returnee reintegration.

Information gathered from *returnee refugee women* was important for identifying the specific challenges of reintegration from their own experience and perspective, i.e. objective 1 (see again statement of objectives above); for discovering the way various aspects of their lived experience impact the process of reintegration for them as individuals, i.e. objective 2; for ascertaining the returnees' knowledge of and participation in the governance processes necessary for their reintegration i.e. objective 4; for discovering problems and opportunities of the governance of reintegration, i. e. objective 5; and for discerning returnees' perception of the success of their own reintegration, i.e. objective 6.

Information collected from *other persons and agencies*, both official and unofficial, was useful for identifying the challenges of reintegration, i.e. objective 1; the various efforts being made to address the challenges of reintegration, i.e. objective 3; for distilling the governance aspects of the reintegration processes, i.e. objective 5; and for understanding the relative successes/failures of the above efforts and processes, i.e. objective 6. These primary sources are also key to cross validating secondary information.

(ii) Secondary sources of data utilized in this research included books, relevant journals, media reports, government documents, unofficial documents such as personal correspondence, available statistics from government and non-government sources, research reports of other researchers, technical reports of concerned agencies, the official websites of agencies such as the UNHCR, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Refugees International, and so on, and the world wide web generally. These resources were accessed by purchasing where possible, through the internet if available on the worldwide

web, and by visiting relevant libraries, government ministries and agency offices both in Liberia and Nigeria, and elsewhere around the world.

These secondary sources of data were pertinent to locating the study within existing literature and for lending it comparative value. For instance, the discussion of the research findings was more robust and meaningful when carried out within this mould. This means then that these secondary sources help to cross- validate data culled from the primary sources. Besides, they provide information which would otherwise be inaccessible to the researcher herself due to the limitations of time, cost, and other such constraints.

3.4 Study population

The target population of this research was primarily adult[34] returnee refugee women who returned to Liberia between 2003 (the suspension of active hostilities following the removal of President Charles Taylor) and September 2006 (the time of data collection). As at the time of fieldwork, official figures of returnee refugees stood at 200,000, with 39.72 percent of this number assisted returnees and majority (60.28%) spontaneous returnees. Of this number, an estimated 51 percent are female. However, official figures relating to age distribution of this population are very rough estimates because the majority of returnee refugees return spontaneously and may not register their return with the appropriate national authorities, meaning that demographic information about the entire returnee population might at best be informed guess work.

3.5 Sampling design and procedures

Non- probabilistic sampling methods were used in this research. Specifically, a combination of purposive sampling and the snowballing or referral method was used to select both the areas/ counties to visit and the participants themselves (returnee refugee women and other categories of persons). The use of this method was dictated by the lack of a complete or reliable sampling frame, as well as constraints of cost and prevailing transport, communications and security conditions in the study site- all of which constrained the adoption of probabilistic sampling methods. There was also the problem of locating the

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[34] For the purpose of this research, adulthood will be defined as being above the age of 15. This is in keeping with international law that delegitimizes the use of children under the age of 15 as members of armed forces. In a situation of conflict, a child above the age of 15 may be deemed sufficiently self aware to voluntarily enlist in the army. In the case of returnee refugee women, the same standard can be applied and a female above the age of 15 may be assumed to have sufficient insight into her condition to meaningfully contribute to this type of investigation. Thus, although two girls aged 13 and 14 volunteered to be interviewed for this research given their unique experiences, the primary subjects of this research were aged at least 15.

returnee refugees themselves since they become less visible as a special category of persons once they return to their homes. Snowballing was instrumental in attenuating this problem, while the purposive selection of research areas with high concentrations of returnees meant that the returnees were more readily accessible.

Research participants for this study were selected from four of the five counties in the country with the highest numbers of returnee refugees, namely Lofa, Montserrado, Nimba and Grand Cape Mount. The selected areas represent the diversities of return context which might have implications for returnee reintegration (see above for description of study site), while the selected interviewees represent a diversity of individuals based on differences of age, country of exile, ethnicity, and so on. In sum, fifty-nine (59) returnee refugee women were the primary interviewees, while another forty one (41) individuals- including returnee men, government and NGO staff, and community leaders- were also interviewed. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of returnee refugees interviewed according to their counties of origin.

Table 3.1 Sample Population of Returnee Women according to their Counties of Residence

Research area/ County name	Frequency (No of respondents)	Percentage (%)
Lofa	2	**3.4**
Grand Cape Mount	11	**18.6**
Montserrado	28	**47.5**
Nimba	18	**30.5**
Total	**59**	**100**

3.6 Data Collection- Methods and Procedures

This research was carried out mainly using qualitative research methods. Three specific instruments were used: the interview (both semi structured and in-depth/unstructured interviews), focus group discussions (FGDs) and observation. These were combined with a review of documents collected. *Triangulation,* as depicted here, is intended to enhance the quality of data collected and to improve the validity and reliability of the findings of the study. The specific use of each of these *methods* is outlined below:

   I.   *Semi- structured Interviews*, using an interview guide (see next section for details), were conducted with 59 returnee refugee women.

  II.   *In depth interviews* (IDIs) were conducted with 41 persons including: returnees (female and male), heads of households, community leaders, government officials and NGO staff, both international and local.

 III.   *Key informant interviews* (KIIs), which were unstructured, were also conducted with fourteen (14) persons- returnees, stayees and other categories of persons. These persons were selected on the basis of their experience or unique position to contribute in specific or exceptional ways to answering the research questions of this study.

 IV.   *Focus Group Discussions* served both exploratory and phenomenological functions in this study (cf. Isiugo- Abanihe and Obono 2002, pp. 78, 79). This means that they were useful for discovering possible relationships between some of the variables of this research, and for understanding the motives and emotions underlying observed phenomena. Furthermore, they were important in cross validating other instruments. To this end, six (6) FGDs, comprising between 5-8 persons each were conducted in this study: four in Montserrado County, and two in Nimba County.

  V.   *Observation* was important for ascertaining returnee, community, government and NGO efforts towards ensuring sustainable reintegration of returnee women. This is to complement and verify data collected using the other instruments.

Procedures: Field research was conducted in Liberia over a five week period in September-October 2006, in order to avoid the heavier portion of the rainy season which would have seriously impeded data collection. This is because the country is known for its heavy thunderstorms, which in combination with the terrible state of the roads would have caused reduced mobility and increased frustrations for this researcher.

Gaining "access to the setting" (Albert 2005: p. 67) in terms of locating the returnee participants was a fundamental challenge in the prosecution of this research. Potential interviewees were found in a variety of locations- homes, market places, offices, skills training centres, and in each case, the researcher introduced herself and the research objectives, before obtaining the informant's consent to an interview. Every informant who participated in this study did so entirely voluntarily and no inducements were given or promised to encourage participation in this research. Most interviews were scheduled after this preliminary introduction for a time more convenient for the informant and that would

enable the interview to commence in as unhurried and comfortable a fashion as possible. Interviewees were assured of complete confidentiality and as much anonymity as they desired[35]. Every interview was conducted in privacy to ensure that the informant expressed herself/ himself as freely as possible.

In the case of FGDs, participation was also entirely voluntary and was never overtly or covertly compelled by authority figures in the environment such as parents, trainers, or bosses. The same assurances of anonymity and confidentiality were given to discussants at the focus groups, and participants were permitted to withdraw at the last minute if they suddenly felt unwilling to share their views in a group- even after initially agreeing to the group discussion.

Most interviews were conducted in the English language although the Liberian brogue sometimes made the language unrecognizable. However, having related over the years with several Liberians, some of whom are my fellow students and colleagues in Nigeria, this was not much of a problem. In the hinterland, I needed the help of two seasoned and previously trained research assistants in conducting the interviews with returnee women as many of the returnees had little or no education or knew only the Liberian pidgin English, and the brogue was somewhat thicker and less intelligible to me. Also, I spent the first one week and a half familiarizing myself with the research field, and mingling with the people in taxis, restaurants, offices, marketplaces, at home, on campus and at church in order to overcome the most apparent disadvantage of an outsider doing research in Liberia[36].

Returnee refugees interviewed were all referred to this researcher by persons known to them, either by family members, agency staff involved with their repatriation in some way, or by their trainers in skills acquisition centres. Government and NGO staffs interviewed were identified by the researcher's prior identification of governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations that have relevance to the aims and objectives of this study, as well as by referral from friends in Liberia. In some cases, I was referred to some other persons by some of these officials when they indicated they know someone more

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[35] Anonymity was not particularly desired by most of the government and NGO functionaries I interviewed as they often began the interview by expressing official viewpoints as official spokespersons of their respective agencies- before eventually expressing personal views regarding issues discussed at the interview.

[36] Marie Smyth details the peculiar problems faced by 'outsiders' doing research in violently divided societies in Africa. Most importantly, her book chapter titled 'Insider- Outsider issues in researching violent and divided societies' points out that given the nature of conflict in Africa's divided societies, the concept of 'outsider' is actually fluid and can even include persons from that society but who do not share the same ethnic/ religious/ ideological/ etc identities and convictions with the people they seek to investigate. See Smyth, 2005: pp. 9-23.

knowledgeable than themselves. As mentioned above, in all cases, the initial contact (in person or by mobile phone) with the informant was basically for familiarization after which an appointment was then scheduled for the actual interview. This was necessary to establish rapport and minimize any fears, suspicions and misgivings that the person might have about an 'outsider' and allow for a meaningful, unguarded exchange during the interview.

Since the primary informants were returnee women, being a female certainly helped in every instance. The women were usually willing to be open and discuss personal details they might have left out if being interviewed by a male. Furthermore the empathy I developed as I listened to them looked genuine to them and enabled them to relax around me- which helped in the interviews. Furthermore, many offices I approached for assistance indicated their willingness to "help this young lady" and indeed often went the extra mile to aid my research.

Although some interviews (especially the in-depth interviews) were tape recorded, all interviews were also concurrently manually recorded, using the researcher's unique shorthand. The researcher secured permission from interviewees before using the tape recorder, and in at least one instance the key informant cautioned that the tape recorder would check the spontaneity of his responses[37]. As much as possible, responses were written down verbatim and cross checked with the respondent for confirmation of wording and meaning. The hand written versions of the interviews were also important because the particular expressions in the recorded versions might become fuzzy with time given the peculiar inflection of the Liberian (pidgin) English. Most interviews lasted between forty minutes and two hours.

This researcher personally moderated all FGDs since I already had many years of experience leading out in small group discussions. Research assistants took notes of the proceedings which were also simultaneously tape recorded. Some FGDs consisted people previously associated with each other while some brought together strangers. However, since I was more of a stranger than other members in the latter instance I found group members bonding very fast and even jokingly taking adversarial positions on some issues to inform (and entertain) me. Five of the FGDs consisted only returnee women, while one consisted a mixture of both sexes.

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[37] This was understandable given this person's high visibility in post war Liberia, and the fact that he is already on record on many topics as a representative of the people in an important government agency.

In every case, the FGDs were very productive in that they helped to cross validate some of the knowledge already gathered and generated information that in some cases were not apparent from interviews. For instance, at one training centre in Monrovia, women were interviewed individually and then interested persons were invited to participate at a later date in group discussions. Amazingly, the group discussions were so lively and open that a couple of women narrated experiences they withheld during the interviews when they observed the openness of their friends.

At the only FGD that comprised both returnee women and men in the same group, it was interesting to note that the concerns voiced by the men were very different from the concerns voiced by the women. When asked about the challenges of return and reintegration, the women responded first by speaking of their economic activities, various hardships such as the loss of a child, and many other problems which they said were more than they ever had before. The women's narrative was interrupted by one of the men who said the only problem "all the Mandingo people" had was getting their houses and lands back. The two men in the group then took time to explain the issue as it affects them, and attempts by the moderator (myself) to move on to other issues basically failed as they simply defined everything else happening in terms of getting their property back. The women did get involved in the discussion, but they also concluded the session by stating that except for the land and property problem, "everything is okay." If I had not recorded the earlier part of the discussion, I would have concluded that I imagined it. This experience was so instructive by itself that the experiment was not repeated anywhere else in the course of this research.

In conclusion, the data collection methods were tailored to suit the unique context within which the research was executed, while painstaking effort was also expended to pay attention to the demands of academic integrity and methodological rigor.

3.7 Data collection- Instrumentation

As noted above, this research employed three main instruments. This section attempts to describe the contents of these instruments. However, it must be noted here that some of the questions that comprise the data collection instruments were adapted from the UNHCR's Gender Checklist for Liberia, December 2003 and UNHCR Somalia's Returnee Monitoring Form (See UNHCR 2004a: Annex 5.3, pp187-198).

The semi structured interview was tagged Gender and Returnee Reintegration Interview- A (GRRIV-A) and was administered only to returnee refugee women. GRRIV-A consisted of 110 mostly open-ended items. These items were divided into eight sections based on the four aspects of reintegration and the research questions that needed to be resolved. These sections are explicated below:

Section one was a guide to asking demographic information and for gently easing into the specifics of the research. This section was tagged 'Bio-data' and asked questions pertaining to age; place of residence, presently and before exile, ethnic group affiliation, marital status, number of children and/or dependents, head of the household, educational qualifications and skills training.

Section two, tagged 'Exile and Return' requested information pertaining to the informant's activities before exile, date(s) of leaving Liberia, country/ countries of asylum, reasons for fleeing Liberia, date of last return to Liberia, reason (s) for returning, the decision to return, family/ dependents who also returned, sponsorship of return, voluntariness of return, information that aided in the decision to return, her most (un)pleasant experiences in exile, how being a woman made a difference in all these.

Section three asked questions relating to access to livelihood resources, and included questions on the challenges/ problems of reintegration, current source(s) of income, employment related issues, income sufficiency, available income generation programs, involvement in educational and skills training programs, contribution to reconstruction in the community, gaps in addressing women's access to sources of livelihood.

Section four probed women and girls' access to social services such as healthcare, potable water, and basic/secondary and tertiary education. It also included questions on returnee women's knowledge of community/government and NGO involvement in providing these services

Section five was concerned with returnee women's access to physical and psychological security. This section gathered information about social support and acceptance, feelings of safety or otherwise, general and women- specific physical security issues, traditional practices affecting physical and psycho-social wellbeing, community initiatives to protect people from gender based violence, gaps in the governance of these issues.

Section six asked questions relating to the interviewee's access to legal processes. Questions in this section asked about ownership of landed and other property and mode of documentation for these, retrieval of pre- war property, ownership of other personal documents, knowledge of and assessment of the system for legal redress, confidence in the justice system.

Section seven investigated political issues, asking about returnee women's participation in the 2005 general elections, feelings of political efficacy, membership of political or other civil association, factors that affect(ed) their participation, assessment of the incumbent political administration, ties with former country of asylum.

The final section was devoted to getting the returnee's general assessment of her current position vis-à-vis her situation as refugee in the country of asylum, and her assessment of her usefulness to the processes of reconstruction and peacebuilding.

The in-depth interviews: Although there was an interview guide tagged Gender and Returnee Reintegration Interview- B (GRRIV- B), the IDIs were (naturally) unstructured, and conducted in a flexible manner to allow for variation in the kinds of information that can be requested from persons of different backgrounds. However, generally questions pertained to the specific position and work of the informant and her/his agency/office; knowledge of and relevance to gender questions in the nascent democracy; engagement with existing governance/power structures and processes at the community/ county/ national level; participation of women and women's organisations in these structures; identification of gender specific risks and opportunities in the post war environment; challenges the organisation faces in its work for women/returnees/communities; assessment of the progress and success of reintegration and peacebuilding in Liberia.

Focus group discussions were generally guided by the Gender and Returnee Reintegration Group Discussion (GRRGD). The discussions centred around the ways in which the war and displacement affected participants' persons, roles, identities and capacities; the changes in community life and gender relations in that time; the challenges of reintegration, both personal and corporate; relationship with stayees in the community; identification of reconstruction efforts by community/government/NGOs; identification of gaps in reintegration programs; and reflections on the benefits or disadvantages of having been in exile, and of return.

Observation was carried out in three of the four counties visited for this research according to the observation schedule contained in the appendix. Specifically, effort was made to ascertain availability, accessibility and quality of healthcare, educational, water and sanitation facilities, as well as the prevailing security atmosphere in those areas visited. While it was sometimes possible to carry out overt observation, in some cases, it was unwise and even risky to ask to be shown these facilities and I had to covertly note these indicators.

3. 8 Methods Matrix

By way of summarizing the information above with respect to the data collection methods, instruments, sources of data and how these contribute to answering the research questions, find below Table 3.2:

Table 3. 2 Methods Matrix

Methods/Instruments	Target Population	Res. Question addressed
One semi structured interview	Returnee refugee women	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
In-depth interviews/Key informant interviews	Family and community heads, government and NGO staff, key informants (including returnee women and men)	1, 3, 5, 6
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	Returnee women and men,	1, 3, 4, 5, 6
Observation	Various aspects of the research field relevant to reintegration	1, 3, 6
Documentary analysis	Aspects of the research field not visible to the researcher in time and space	1, 2, 3

3.9 Validity and Reliability of research instruments

In the positivist tradition, validity of research instruments refers to the extent to which the research instrument measures the variable or phenomenon it is intended to measure. Reliability has to do with the consistency and/ or stability of the measurement, and therefore the generalisability of the results of the research carried out using the specific instrument of measurement. However, as many authors writing on research in the qualitative tradition have

pointed out, the measures of validity and reliability differ for quantitative and qualitative measures (Sambo 2005).

For this research on returnee refugee reintegration in Liberia, painstaking attention was paid to ensuring validity and reliability to the extent possible using qualitative instruments. In the first place, multiple methods were used- otherwise called triangulation- so that the strengths of one method could lend credence to the data collected by filling gaps due to the weaknesses of the other method. Thus while interviews were used as the primary means of data collection, the bias possible by reliance on the interviewee's view point was reduced by employing the researcher's own observations as well as the examination of written documents.

The semi- structured interview was carefully designed to more than adequately obtain information pertinent to answering the research questions. The GRRIV-A incorporated tested and tried questions from the UNHCR's Gender Checklist for Liberia, December 2003, and the draft of the instrument was given to experts to vet and critique in order to increase the validity of the measure. Furthermore, research assistants who helped in administering the GRRIV- A were given detailed and careful training, and their initial interviews were supervised by this researcher. I personally conducted all in-depth interviews and group discussions in order to ensure that, in spite of the flexibility of the GRRIV- B and GRRGD schedule, the actual information solicited contributes significantly to achieving the aims of the study.

In addition, the reliability of the information gathered was further enhanced by the repetition of key questions in different forms at different points of the same interview. This contributed to consistency as inconsistent answers could be immediately clarified with the informant. Furthermore, several interviews were conducted solely for the purpose of cross validating information from other sources. Besides, initial findings of this study were put forward to key informants in the field as a way of establishing inter-observer reliability and respondent validation.

In conclusion, other researchers can weigh the validity and reliability of this study by carefully studying this chapter that details the methods and procedures used in executing the research, and if necessary verify and replicate the research adopting the same methods.

3.10 Method of data analysis

Information collected from interviews and focus group discussions using the procedures outlined above were manually transcribed to preserve the contextual flavour and subsequently coded using themes related to the research questions, as well as themes arising from the data, that is both bottom-up and thematic or start-list coding. This process resulted in the quantification of some variables in terms of frequencies and percentages, while the relationship between some other variables were established using the correlation coefficient. This process of quantification was done with the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software.

The qualitative analysis of other data was done manually by the researcher herself using the different processes of doing grounded theory analysis, beginning with open coding (fracturing the text word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence, and deriving conceptual labels) and ending with axial coding (establishing categories, linkages and relationships between categories).

 Although the results of data analysis are presented in narrative mostly to incorporate quotes from interviews with informants, tables and other graphical representations are also employed where appropriate. Information from primary documents and other secondary sources are incorporated in the narrative presentation of findings.

3.11 Limitations to study

As with all research, certain unassailable factors dictate the boundaries of the researcher's efforts.

Some common limitations to research include time, cost and various logistics. As noted earlier, the language of the people, especially outside Monrovia was a challenge, and in fact explains the low number of semi structured interviews performed in Lofa County. Time was also a constraining factor; thus given the limited time available for the fieldwork and since interviews are also time-consuming, only a limited number of interviews could be carried out. Furthermore, the terrible state of the roads meant that I could not visit all the counties or even districts that were of interest to this study in the limited time available to me. The cost of doing research in a post conflict environment, and especially that of Liberia cannot be underestimated; all transactions- except for taxi fare- were carried out using the US dollar ($). Given the high exchange rate of the dollar to naira (Nigeria's own currency), spending in dollars was very expensive for the researcher.

Some limitations were specific to this research. Many of the issues of interest, such as rape, family and community relations, female genital cutting and so on are highly sensitive. Victims of rape are often ashamed and unwilling to share (and thereby re-live) their experience (s). I was told bluntly by one key informant in Lofa county that I should not ask anyone about the 'bush schools' that perform female genial cutting as talking about it is TABOO. Thus wherever I came across this kind of limitation, I rephrased the question to be indirect; or simply asked someone else who may give a little more information. In the case of subjects labelled taboo, I simply desisted from asking them in settings where I and the informant might be overheard so as not to endanger both of us, and omitted them in most of the interviews I personally conducted. However, I allowed the research assistants, who were themselves Liberian young women to use their discretion in whether to ask the questions or not.

Although the security situation in the country was much better than I had been told while I was still in Nigeria, moving around the research field required a lot of caution that encroached on the study in some ways. For instance, while in Monrovia, I encountered many written warnings on agency bulletin boards warning their staff and other visitors to the country to avoid staying out later than nightfall as there were rampant reports of armed robbery attacks, street shootings and even robbery in broad daylight on public streets. Knowing I had to get back to my lodgings before nightfall often meant starting the journey back home at the end of a day's work as early as 3 or 4 p.m in order to avoid getting caught up in traffic- as I once was and arrived at dark. Furthermore, being a female restrained me from taking risks that men would take as the danger of rape and other sexual assault for a woman has first and foremost physical consequences which include pregnancy and infection with HIV/AIDS. This meant shorter working days which further reduced the time available to me.

As an 'outsider' I was confronted with suspicion in some areas, from people who made it clear that they did not want to discuss their situation with me. In fact, I quickly discovered that the mere sighting of a tape recorder or camera made many people withdraw. This is why, as much as possible, I avoided the use of the tape recorder (and camera) except with key informants and persons who are more conversant with and comfortable with it.

Finally, it is important to note that while the findings of this research are true for the sample studied, they must be limited in application to other groups who may not share the peculiar

characteristics of the sample for this study. Even the statistical representations may not be taken as statistically generalisable as they describe the sample studied and that sample was not probabilistically selected for scientific generalisation and prediction.

3.12 Ethical considerations

In all cases, ethical considerations were applied to the entire research process, from the selection of informants to the presentation of data collected from them. Special effort was made to preserve the safety, anonymity, privacy, confidentiality and dignity of the participants in this study. Ethical principles of personal and professional integrity, autonomy, non- maleficence, justice, fidelity and veracity were rigorously adhered to by this researcher.

While scientific objectivity is difficult to profess in a study of this kind, every effort was made, not to achieve detachment from the subjects of the research (as the cost of that would have been the sensitivity and empathy necessary for achieving full cooperation), but rather, to maintain neutrality on issues discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter presents both descriptive and narrative analysis of the information derived from the various methods employed on the basis of the research questions. These are discussed under the following headings:

o   Demographic information

o   Challenges of reintegration for returnee refugee women

o   Effects of specific socio- personal factors and gender on reintegration

o   Efforts to address the challenges of reintegration

o   Returnee women's knowledge of and participation in the governance of reintegration

o   Governance issues

o   Perceived success of reintegration of returnee refugee women

4.2 Demographic information on the research participants

This subsection gives certain background information on the returnee refugee women that participated in this study.

4.2.1 Distribution by age

Respondents ranged in age from 13 to 70 years old, and most returnee refugees interviewed (40 or 66.7 percent) are 35 years or less, while another 31.7 per cent were returnee women between the ages of 36 and 70, as indicated in Figure 4.1.
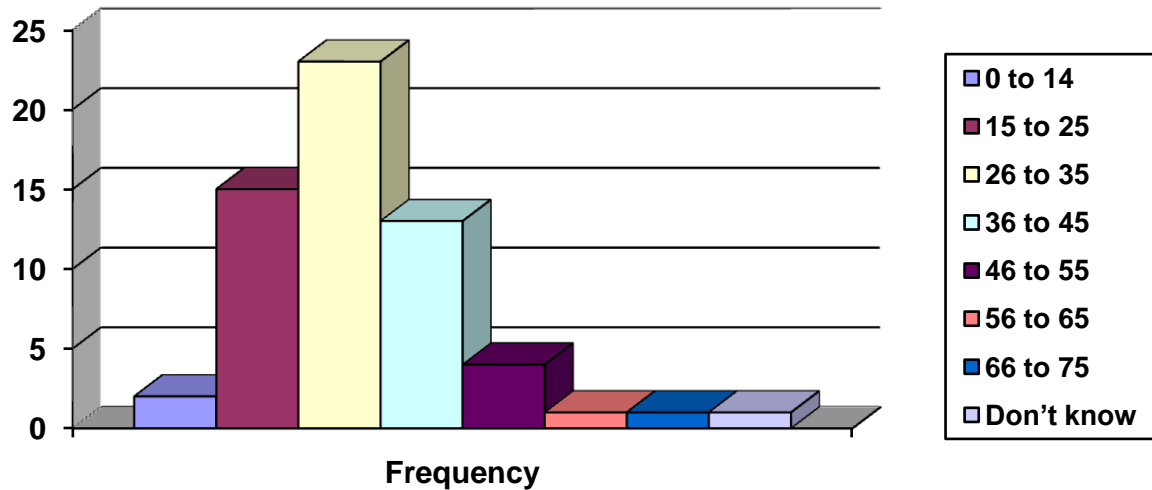
Figure 4.1 Age distribution of respondents

4.2.2 Distribution by place of residence/ county:

As indicated in Table 3.1 and Figure 4.2, respondents were drawn from four counties, with 45 percent of informants being resident in Montserrado County. Another 33.3 (or 20 persons) were resident in Nimba county, and the remaining 21.7 percent were resident in Grand Cape Mount county and Lofa county.
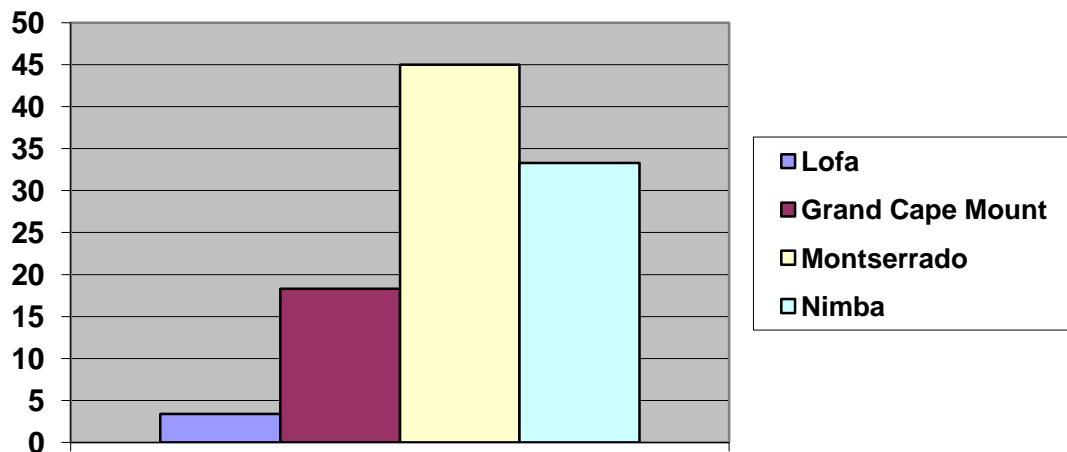
Figure 4.2 Respondents by county of residence

4.2.3 Distribution by ethnic group

Figure 4.3 indicates that the respondents were from a variety of ethnic groups with at least one from each of the groups pictured below, and no more than ten from any single ethnic group.
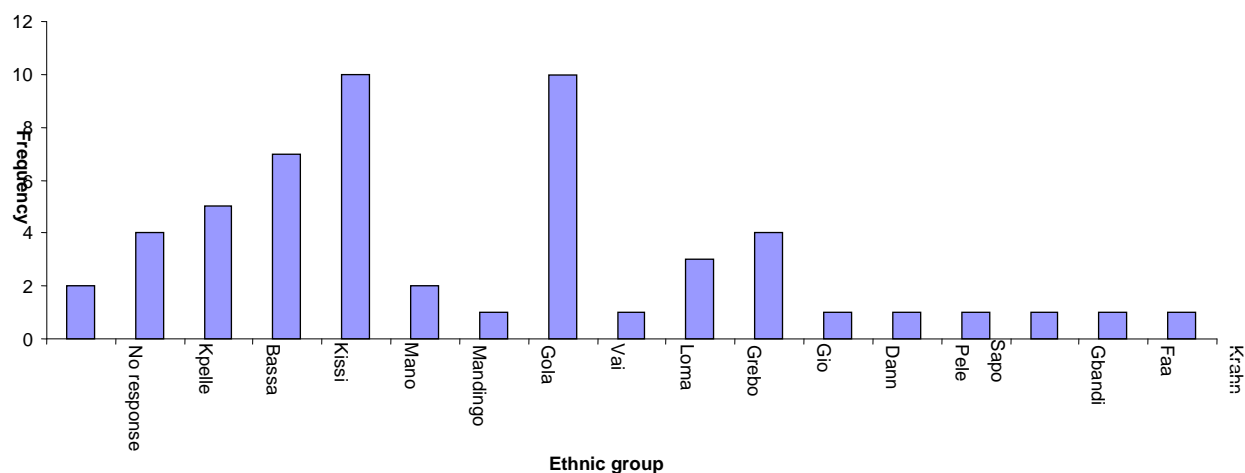
Figure 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by ethnic group

4.2.4 Distribution by reason for change from one locality/town/county to another

Although 53.3 or 32 persons interviewed for this research had not changed their place of residence upon return to Liberia, 46.7 percent or 27 women did change their locality of residence. Of the 46.7 percent that changed their location, 23.3 percent did so as a result of the war which either destroyed their property or made them lose their property and land to other people. 13.3 percent had a change of location in order to be with their family and friends for mutual support. About 6.7 percent of the respondents had a change of location in order to get comfort defined as available shelter and friendly neighbours while 1.6 percent had a change of location because their husband left them and another 1.6 percent claimed to be too young to remember their residence before exile.

4.2.5 Distribution of respondents by marital status

Of the 60 returnees interviewed, 29 or 48.4% were single women. Of the remaining number, 8 or 13.3% are married and still with their spouse, another 8 or 13.3 % are cohabiting with some male partner, while 9 or 15% are widowed and another 5 women are separated from their spouse. This shows the variety of spousal relations to be found in the return environment, and also possibly indicates the preponderance of single or non- married women in the general population.

Figure 4.4 Pie Chart showing the distribution of respondents by marital status

Legend: Single, Cohabiting, Married
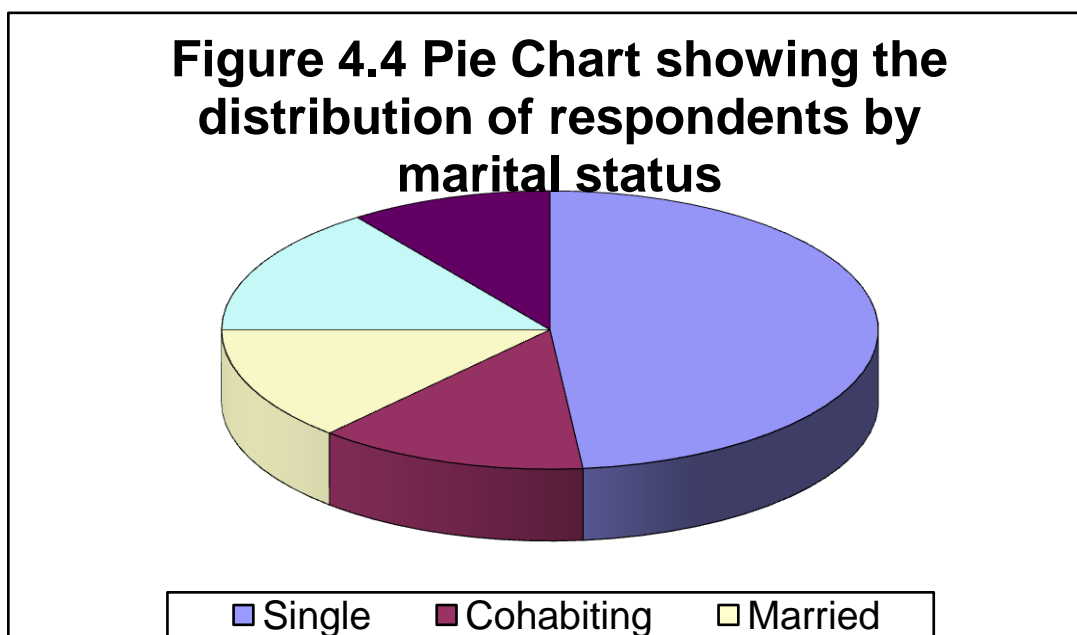
Fig 4.4 Distribution of respondents by marital status

4.2.6 Distribution by household head and reasons given

More than half of the respondents (35 persons or 59.3%) are heads of households while the remaining 24 or 40.6% live in households headed by a parent (11 persons), a husband/partner (9 persons), a sibling (2 persons) or some other relative or authority figure (2 persons). Of the number that are heads of households, 14 indicate that their husband or other significant partner were killed during the war, leaving them to fend for themselves and their family, while 7 indicate that they became heads of household when they lost their family.

4.2.7 Distribution by number of children\other dependents

Figure 4.5 shows that only three of the respondents interviewed had no children or other dependents living with them. Of the remaining 56, 35 women have between one and three children, 18 have between 4 and 6 children or other dependents, while 3 women indicated that they have 7 or more children. It seems then that 95% of the respondents have children, and 36.7% of these have 4 children or more.
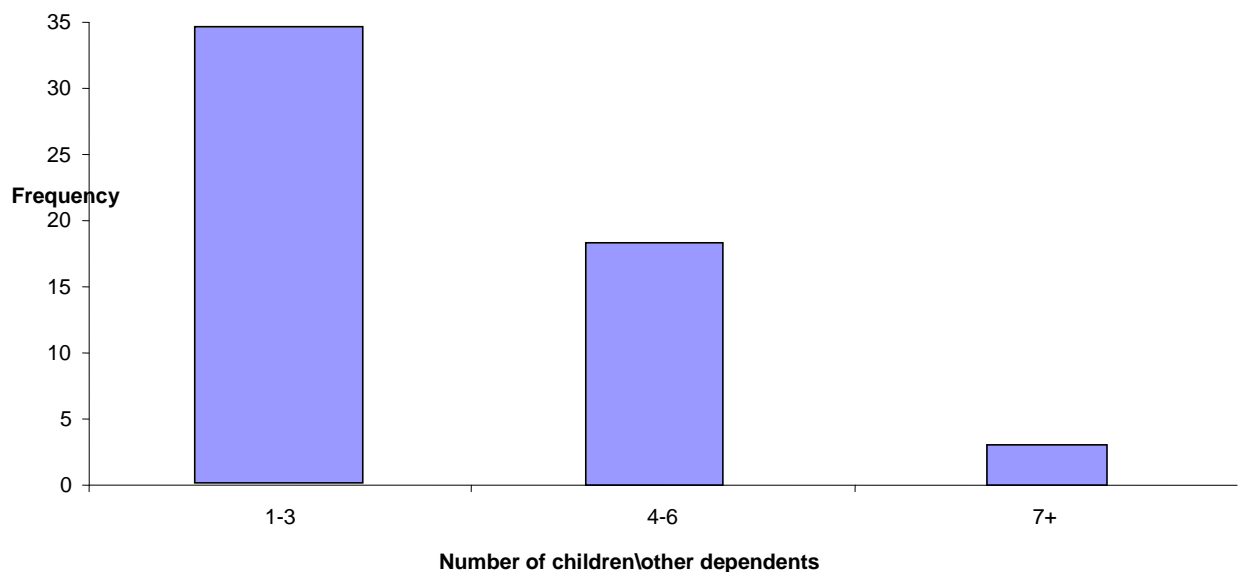
Figure 4.5: Frequency distribution of respondents by number of children\other dependents

4. 2. 8 Distribution of respondents by highest educational qualification

Although up to 35 percent of the respondents (or 21 persons) have no formal education, the remaining 65 percent or 38 women have varying degrees of formal education; 28.3 percent have some primary level education; 20 percent have junior secondary school education; 13.3 percent have senior secondary education; and one person each have technical education, a bachelor's degree and postgraduate education.

4.2.9 Distribution by skills training

Information gathered from the returnee women indicates that 11 women (or 18.3%) possessed no specific economic skills as at the time of interview, while the remaining 49 women (81.7%) were skilled in various abilities such as beautification, sewing/tailoring, catering, bread-making, tie and dye, soap-making, hairdressing, cosmetology, trading, and secretarial skills.

4. 2. 10 Activities engaged in by the returnees before exile

About a quarter of the respondents (26. 7% or 16 persons) were hesitant and unwilling to disclose the nature of their activities in Liberia before they went into exile. Of the rest, 5% or 3 persons were combatants during the war, 16.7% or 9 persons were farming, 15% were students, 13.3% were traders, 10% were 'doing nothing', while 13.3% or 8 persons indicated

that they worked for peace in their communities. This means that majority of the returnees became refugees as civilians affected by the civil war.

4.2.11 Year of leaving Liberia

One-fifth of the respondents could not name the specific year they left Liberia and went into exile as refugees. However, 28 women (or 46.6%) went into exile between 1990 and 1997; 4 left Liberia between 1998 and 2000; while 16 women (or 26.7%) only left the country after the year 2001. This means that almost half of the returnees interviewed (46.6%) had been in exile for almost 10 years at least, depending on the date of their return to Liberia; while the other 26.7% who went into exile between 2001 and 2004 had been in exile for a shorter time.

4.2.12 Country of asylum

The informants came from a diversity of countries of asylum, representing therefore a variety of refugee experiences. Specifically, 31.6% were refugees in Guinea, 16.7% were refugees in Ghana, 21.7% resided in Cote d'Ivoire, 23.3% were refugees in Sierra Leone and 1.7 percent were refugees in Nigeria. 5 percent of the respondents did not indicate their country of asylum.

4.2.13 Reasons for leaving Liberia

Respondents gave multiple reasons for their leaving Liberia. The reason most cited for this was the war (cited 34 times), then Fear (cited 31 times), then ethnicity (7 times), family considerations/pressure (6 times), rape (5 times), starvation, opportunity to access skills/education, harassment and abuse (each 3 times), to seek medical attention (2 times), resettlement (2 times), and one person gave no reason.

4.2.14 Reasons for return

Most of the returnee participants gave multiple reasons for returning at the time they did. 24 persons gave at least two reasons, four gave three reasons and one supplied up to four reasons for return. Since the war was the reason most cited for the decision to flee Liberia, understandably then, the end of the war (including statements that "Liberia is peaceful/ safe")was the most cited reason for returning to the country (16 times). Others said they came to participate in peace building/reconstruction/decision making (8 times); to vote and participate in the elections (6 times); because Liberia is home (7 times); because there was suffering or unbearable conditions in exile, people being cruel to them (8 times); because of the idleness and lack of work in the camps (6 times); because the United Nations said to

return (6 times); don't have anybody or family member died (8 times); because resettlement wasn't working (4 times); and a variety of other individual reasons.

4.2.15 Persons respondents went into exile with

Almost a quarter of the women interviewed (23% or 14 women) fled Liberia with their husband and children in tow. 20% fled with their children only, while 8.3% fled with their children and parent(s). Another 8.3% left the country with some or other member of their extended family, while 13.4% fled with their parent(s) and sibling(s). However, while 3.4 % indicated leaving Liberia with a boyfriend, up to 15% of interviewees said they left Liberia unaccompanied. 8.3% did not respond either way.

4.2.16 Summary of experience during exile

When asked to give a summary of their exile experience, 5% or 3 of the women interviewed declined to discuss the matter. However, 25% or 14 women concluded that they had a generally pleasant experience in the country of asylum. Of the remaining interviewees, 43.3% said they experienced no comfort in exile; 16.7% complained of experiencing too much harassment; and 10% were affected by language barriers.

4.3 Challenges of reintegration for returnee refugee women

This section presents information gathered about the varied challenges faced by returnee refugee women in Liberia. These are grouped into economic, social- psychological, legal and political challenges, based on evidence gathered from the data (i.e. bottom-up coding) and pre-existing categories from the literature (i.e. thematic/start-list coding).

4.3.1 Economic challenges

In our interviews with returnee women in Liberia, questions about economic challenges were framed in terms of access to livelihood and the many factors affecting these. Most women gave multiple responses about the challenges they face in accessing means of economic survival: while 55 returnee women mentioned at least one challenge they face, more than half of all the research participants, 30 women, mentioned up to two specific challenges; 15 mentioned up to three challenges and five women mentioned up to four personal challenges.

According to one young returnee woman, "the challenges and problems in Liberia are numerous." Some women could not even say precisely what their problem was and made do

with the statement that "survival is hard." One former refugee who returned in 1998 but stayed since then remarked that 'I don't see anything becoming good for the next three, four years. We expect things to go [in a particular] way…but everyday things are getting harder.'

However, for many returnee women, the difficulty in accessing the most basic amenities such as food, shelter and clothing is the biggest challenge of all. About half of all the returnee women interviewed (28 women) identified this lack of basic needs as their overriding challenge – amongst others – as returnee women in Liberia. Of these, 12 women complained of not getting enough food for themselves and their children, or not getting enough food regularly. 11 women indicated that they do not have their own lodging, or they are still lodging in the temporary/makeshift quarters they put up when they arrived newly from exile, and in addition cannot find comfortable and affordable quarters. Another two (2) women explained that they currently lack shelter because their lands were seized during the war and their house destroyed. One woman lamented not even having clothes to cover she and her children. Two other women indicated that they could not access services related to providing shelter and other basic necessities for returnee women.

Closely related to the challenge of food, shelter and clothing is the challenge of financial subsistence, that is, the non- availability of money/cash in hand to meet the women's and their family's needs. Twenty six (26) women stated explicitly that they experience financial difficulties that have made their reintegration difficult. Additionally, two (2) women noted the high cost of living and difficult economic conditions in the post war country as the root cause of their financial hardship. Two (2) women specifically mentioned their inability to pay rent as the most difficult financial burden they currently bear. Another three (3) identified the lack of transport money to move from place to place. One woman admitted that having too many children (she has seven) has made life too hard for her financially. This lack of money for meeting daily subsistence needs is the single most cited challenge of returnee women as 34 or 57.6% of women interviewed mentioned financial difficulties.

Another major challenge experienced by returnee Liberian women is unemployment. Twelve (12) women indicated their lack of a job is a fundamental challenge for them, while three (3) mentioned their spouse's lack of a job or other means of livelihood. A young mother of five children who has no formal education puts it this way: "No good support from my boyfriend or other family members. My boyfriend is not working, [and he cannot even get a job]

because he is not lettered…." One woman mentioned that lack of farm tools has made it difficult for her to resume farming activities that could meet her needs.

One of our key informants in Nimba County, corroborated the above from her experience in work with returnee populations. This person stated that:

> Reintegration for refugees is a big challenge as they have been fed and schooled in camps where schools are free….Now they still need uniforms and other school materials. Now most vulnerable women are not catered to for example, those with broken down houses now rent which they did not do in the country of asylum.

Also in Nimba County, we were reliably informed that one of the problems that pose a challenge to reintegration is the lack of support for agricultural activities which in the pre-war years was a mainstay of the Liberian economy. When asked what the main problems of reintegration are in Nimba County, one of the agency staff there identified agriculture related challenges as being of priority:

> Support for agriculture is not reaching down to the local people, and agriculture is the base [of the economy] here. There is lack of farm- to- market roads so farmers sell their produce for lesser than its worth here in the rural areas as commercial vehicles do not ply the roads [here].

Symptomatic of these various challenges of accessing livelihood is the individual's source of income, or more informally, the means by which the person meets her and her family's basic needs. When asked, what is your current source of income? And, how do you meet you and your family's needs? Most women indicated that they relied on more than one source of income to meet they and their family's needs. Almost half of all the respondents (26 of them or 44.1%) said they relied on family members (15 women), neighbours and friends (3 women) boyfriends (5 women) and charity or begging for alms (3 women). Sixteen (16) women however said they relied on petty trading, selling mostly various food items to get by. Ten (10) of the participants in this study signified that they use the skills they learnt either before the war, in exile, or upon return to make a living. They specified baking, hairdressing, farming, brick-making, soap-making and hunting as such skills that earn them a livelihood as returnees.

Other women (3 of them) took odd-jobs such as working as daily hire labourers to make ends meet. Two women said they work as prostitutes (their own designation, not mine), while another two simply said they "hustle" daily to make ends meet. One woman said as at the time of interviewing her, she was still dependent on the UN rations given to her as an

"assisted" returnee. One woman simply said she did "nothing." However, three women ascribed their survival to "God's mercy," while identifying other supplementary means of meeting their daily needs. In all, only four women indicated that they have any sort of formal employment, and of this one is a teacher, one is a contract staff with an NGO, two serve as daily paid workers in the establishments where they work.

Since majority of the women (55 or 93.2%) do not have formal paid employment outside the home, three of the four who do have indicated that they accessed such jobs by responding with an application to the job advertisement and undergoing a screening process with other applicants.

When all the women were asked what difficulties they encounter as returnee women looking for jobs, or relatedly were asked reasons for their unemployment, only 31 women or 52.5% of all participants gave specific challenges they face in accessing job or employment opportunities. Of these, 10 women admitted their lack of formal education and skills training made them unemployable in the post war Liberian economy. Three (3) women said they did not get jobs because they have 'no contact,' or *connections* in Nigerian parlance. Four (4) of the women who responded said there were no job openings anywhere, while one (1) woman said she couldn't find her field of work. Two (2) women said they did not have the transport money to go out and look for jobs, while another two (2) women admitted that they had not even bothered to look for jobs. Other women were concerned with their lack of skills training or appropriate education and thus two (2) of them indicated that they wanted to gain skills training first and go to school first respectively. Five (5) women were more interested in the lack of capital or tools with which to start up their own business. Two (2) women said their main challenge in looking for employment is that they are occupied with the care of the children, and there is a lack of child care facilities to enable them look for and take up employment outside the home.

For those women who indicated that they are self employed and/or doing some trading or other business, we were interested in knowing how they accessed the resources they used to start up the business. Twelve women responded to the question: of this, five (5) women obtained credit or loans from friends to start their business; three (3) sold the food and non food items they received as assistance from the UNHCR to raise the funds; one woman got the money from her family members; one woman got the money from a boyfriend; one

woman actually sells goods for some other person; while one other woman sold the stuff she came with from exile in order to raise the funds needed.

Table 4.1 Means by which the self employed accessed resources

Means by which the self employed accessed resources				
Means	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
no response	47	79.7	47	79.7
sale of UN items	3	5.1	50	84.7
credit basis/loans from friends	5	8.5	55	93.2
Family	1	1.7	56	94.9
Boyfriend	1	1.7	57	96.6
sell for other people	1	1.7	58	98.3
materials from exile	1	1.7	59	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2006

The returnee women were also asked about their access to skills training programs that would contribute to their acquiring a means of livelihood. 34 women said they had participated in some form of skills training since they arrived in Liberia, while 12 women said they had not accessed any skills training opportunity. Those returnees who said they had not participated in any skills training since arrival in Liberia gave reasons including that they already acquired skills in exile; their current job keeps them busy; lack of time; lack of child care; difficulties in registering for skills training; lack of opportunity; they already acquired skills before exile; tribal discrimination; and still waiting for the next phase of selection for the skills training.

Whatever the source of income indicated by the returnee women interviewed, the study was interested in knowing to what extent the income realized made a difference in the process of reintegration for the participants. Thus we asked them: is your income sufficient to meet you and your family's basic needs? Although five (5) returnee women said they had enough to meet their basic needs, the majority, 39 women (or 66.1%) said they did not have enough to meet they and their family's needs. One woman said sometimes they have enough, sometimes they do not have enough, and they manage whatever they get.
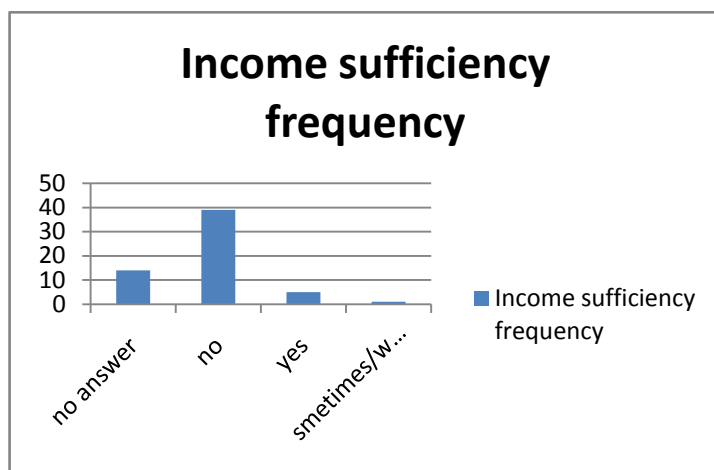
Fig 4.6 Income sufficiency frequency

4.3.2 Social- Psychological Challenges of reintegration

The social aspect of reintegration is multifaceted and interweaves the entire reintegration narrative of the women interviewed for this study. In this section, challenges related to access to social services, family support and psychological security, and physical safety are discussed. In terms of social services relevant to reintegration, healthcare, water and education are specifically addressed in this study as a sample of the women's experience with the entire system. Psychological security is discussed in terms of the existence and impact of family, and community support networks on the individual's sense of safety and security. Physical security is discussed in terms of the general security situation and the particular safety challenges for women in their communities of return.

For some women, when asked about the challenges they currently face as returnees, they were quick to mention the social aspects of reintegration even before speaking about the challenges of access to economic livelihood.

4.3.2.1 Access to social services. When asked about the availability and accessibility of facilities for addressing women's healthcare needs, more than half of the women interviewed (33 women or 56%) said that the relevant facilities were both available and accessible to them in their areas of return, while 12 of them (or 20.3%) said the relevant healthcare facilities were not available to them. A further 5 persons (or 8.5%) said although they know the facilities are available in their area, they lacked access to them. Nine women had no idea about the availability or accessibility of the facilities.

AVAILABILITY OF HEALTHCARE SERVICES

don't know ■ no ■ yes ■ available but not accessible

9% 15%
20%
56%
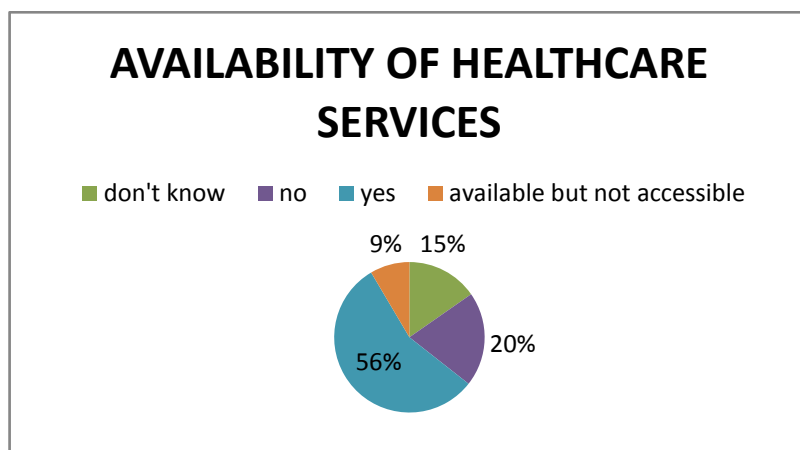
Fig 4.7 Availability of healthcare services

When asked specifically about the availability of female healthcare providers in any capacity (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, etc), 24 women had no idea because as some of them said, they had not had cause to visit the health centre, clinic or hospital yet. However, of the remaining number of participants, five (5) women said there are no female healthcare service providers, while a little more than half, 30 women said there were.

Female health care providers frequency

■ Female health care providers frequency
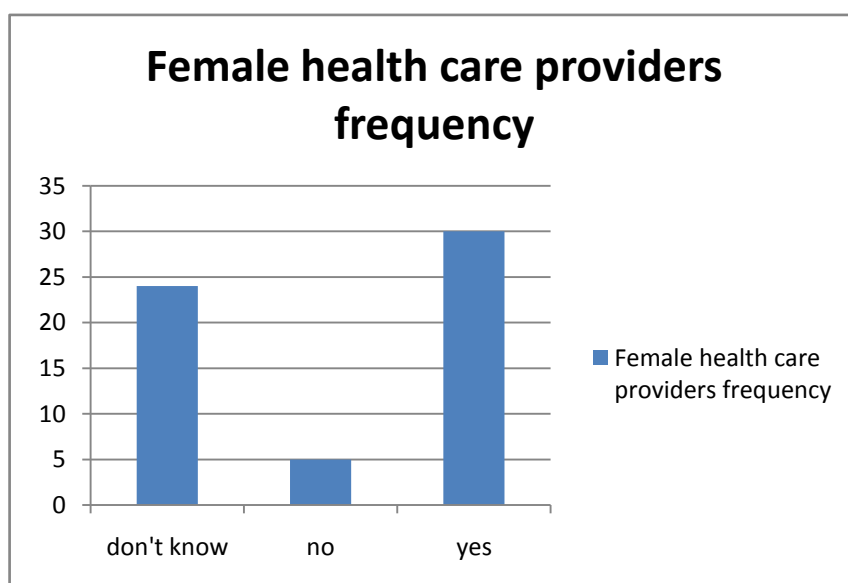
Fig 4.8 Availability of female healthcare providers

Various factors were identified by the participants in this study as limiting returnee women's access to healthcare facilities in their respective areas of return. Some of these factors include poverty and lack of money to make payment for the service, lack of drugs or medicine at the centre, lack of trained experts, lack of necessary equipment, long queues, lack of transportation fare to reach the clinic, substandard clinics and the person not feeling

comfortable with the services rendered and need for 'contacts' before being able to gain access.

Most women, 36 of them (22 declined to comment), also felt that certain other healthcare services should be provided in their community while one woman simply said she didn't go often and so had no idea what could be needed. However, the most mentioned facility needed is a new clinic in the community- mentioned thirteen times. Eight persons identified the need for equipment in the hospitals, and an equal number said their clinic needed beds. Eight more needed the services of a gynaecologist in their area; seven asked for an eye clinic; another six asked for drugs and the relevant medication to be available at their clinic; four identified the need for a heart specialist; and two mentioned the need for 'doctors to operate', that is, surgeons. Other desired health facilities included sanitation facilities, maternity care, an ear clinic, a paediatrician, vaccination for both children and adults, and safe delivery tools.

4.3.2.2. Access to water. This was also one of the issues addressed in the interviews with returnee women. The two principal sources of water mentioned by most of the women (40 women) are the hand-pump and the dug well. Three women said they buy their water, while one woman said her principal source of water is the creek. Further, from the data collected, while up to 56% of the participants in this study said healthcare was both available and accessible to them, only 25.4% or one-quarter (15 women) said they had access to *sufficient* water to meet their personal, sanitation and household needs. 55.9% or 33 women categorically said they did not consider the water they get sufficient to meet their needs.
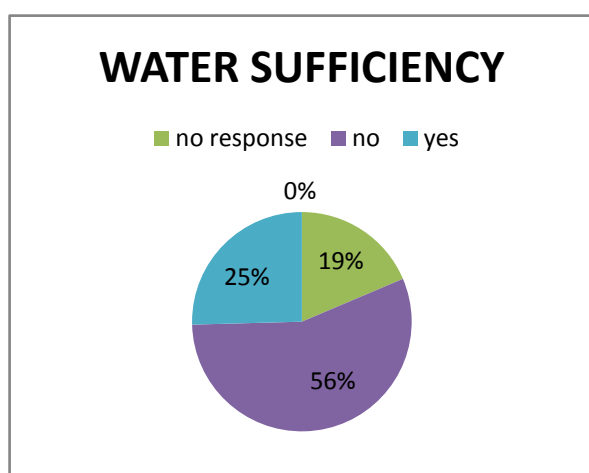
Fig 4.9 Water sufficiency of respondents

4.3.2.3. Access to education was one of the main challenges that the returnee women surveyed for this study identified as affecting their reintegration. The lack of opportunities for educational advancement was a reintegration challenge affecting 23 women. 14 of these indicated a desire to continue and eventually complete their own education, while 9 women lamented the inability to pay the fees for their own children's schooling. One mother of four who had been in exile for fourteen years could not resist contrasting the situation in Liberia with that as a refugee in Sierra Leone:

> In exile, my children were attending schools that were tuition free….But [here] I have to spend almost all my earning for school fees and school materials.

Thus when asked specifically about they or their children's access to primary/high school, and/or tertiary education, only 16 women said they had access to education facilities, while three women said education is only available to some children and two persons said they have access only to government school. 14 others simply said they had no access. When asked further about their female children's access to education, although the majority did not respond (83.1% or 49 women), 7 women said yes while 3 women definitely said no, and their girl child did not have access.

However, the returnees interviewed were able to identify the various obstacles affecting they and their children's access to education. The biggest obstacle for the women surveyed seems to be lack of finance translated to mean the lack of cash or a job to sponsor themselves and the children in school. 15 women gave this singular reason. Other reasons given as affecting access to education included lack of food, teenage or early pregnancy, lack of support, prostitution, abandonment by spouse or intimate other, lack of transportation fare, unsafe abortions, the voice of the poor not being heard, rape, denial of justice, teacher's sexual exploitation and being a single mother.

However, another peculiar reason advanced by the UNHCR Community Services assistant in Voinjama, Lofa County as affecting the girl child's access to education was child labour. According to this individual, girls are very often as much the breadwinner as any other of their parents as they are given full time trading and household responsibilities that disallow them from participating in schooling.

4.3.2.4. Family support and Psychological security. This research was interested in discovering the family dynamics that affect the individual's reintegration, so we asked the

returnee women surveyed whether they returned to Liberia with any family member or whether they have any family/friends in the community to which they returned. As has been established before (see Figure 4.5), only three of the participants interviewed had no children or other dependents living with them. 97% of them have children, and 37% of these have 4 children or more. In addition to these dependents however, the women identified a variety of relatives with whom they currently reside. These are represented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Category of family members staying with returnees

Family presence				
Response	frequency	Percentage	cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
no response	19	32.2	19	32.2
sibling (brother/sister)	4	6.8	23	39
father	1	1.7	24	40.7
mother	2	3.4	26	44.1
parents and siblings	4	6.8	30	50.8
Boyfriend	1	1.7	31	52.5
aunty/uncle/aunty & uncle & cousins	4	6.8	35	59.3
Friends	3	5.1	38	64.4
children	5	8.5	43	72.9
husband and children	4	6.8	47	79.7
extended family	2	3.4	49	83.1
husband, children, relatives	2	3.4	51	86.4
children, family/relatives, friends	8	13.6	59	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2006.

However, when asked whether the presence of such family members or friends made a difference in the returnee woman's ability to cope with the circumstances of return, 32 women or 54% of the participants said it did affect their reintegration, whether positively or negatively. Only four women (or 7%) said the presence of their family of friends made no difference to their reintegration.

For one woman, the presence of her brother and other friends around her did not make much of a difference because they are also affected by the hardships and it is "when they get something, they help me." Others were able to give a more positive assessment. One single head of household who said she returned with her children but "the job facility is the only family I have in this area," said this made a positive difference for her reintegration because "the living condition here is far better than that of Guinea… and I feel that where you find

life suitable is your home." This feeling of psychological rest is echoed by one 36 year old mother of five who returned to some relatives who knew her parents and live in her community. She says: "the presence of this people is of help to us. They serve as encouragement for us."

However, for one returnee who said she came back with her three children but does not have any family in her area of return, the absence of family and relatives made a difference. According to her, "my husband who was the breadwinner died, my home was burnt, and therefore coming home to start from zero balance was a challenge." Another mother of two who said she was squatting with a friend, said the absence of her family made her return experience "very unbearable." One woman whose only family she returned with are her four children said this made a difference in her ability to cope because she had "more problems because of the children and my boyfriend is not here to help."
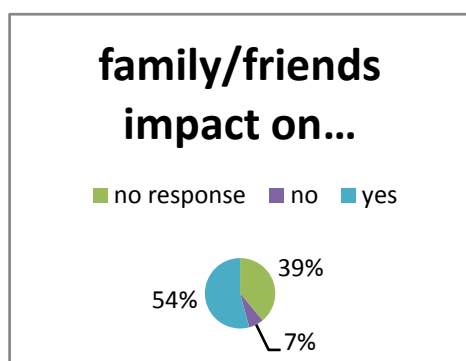
Fig 4.10 Respondents' views on family/friends impact on reintegration

A fundamental challenge affecting 23 of the women (representing 39% of the participants in this study), and that impinges on other aspects of their lives and livelihood is the fact that they do not have a reliable family/social support system. Five (5) women indicated that they had been abandoned by their boyfriend/husband and this affected their current predicament. Says a 37- year old woman in Montserrado County: "My husband left me when I had twins in 1993, and then I had to work for somebody… and work on contract to make a living. My problem now is I am paying for rent… and my husband and I are not in good condition." Another woman's experience demonstrates how seriously interwoven with reintegration the issue is. The 33 year old mother of seven states thus: "My children are many; their father abandoned them for another woman. They have started school but their fees are not completed at school. Their chance of completing the school is very slim, reason being that I don't have any means of income generation." Another woman in Grand Cape Mount said her

problem is that there is "no money to help me. My boyfriend left me pregnant and ran away… [now] no food, no lodgings…." And this 34 year old mother of four puts all her problems down to lack of support: "Now we no get anything. The hostel we live in, no money to pay the rentage. No money, no food, even soap is *ha-ard* to get. I don't have anybody…."

Thirteen other women said they 'have nobody' to help them, 2 claimed that their family was not supporting them, and 2 said they could not locate their family members upon return. One woman expressed her bitterness and frustration thus: "I regret returning even till now [because] no brother and no family to help." And one 62 year old female head of household in Nimba said, "I have sleepless night because my husband who could have been the breadwinner died during the crisis… " One woman further complained that she had not received the UNHCR package they had been promised. What is remarkable about this is that the women themselves link the lack of social support to their difficulties of reintegration.

Up to eight women stated that they have difficulty readjusting to their return to Liberia. One mentioned enduring abuse from the person hosting her in her area of return, thus making it difficult for her to adjust easily. One woman stated that her children were being 'mocked' and that made her uncomfortable. One ex-combatant and returnee refugee in Nimba County states that: "…I've been mocked at for being Mandingo, my one child is denied the right to play with other Liberian children [they call him] 'you Mandingo boy'…." Another woman similarly stated that she had to endure 'tribal abuse.'

Three women specifically ascribed their difficulties of reintegration to gender factors such as "male domination" and cultural norms relating to women's lack of voice and decision-making power. According to one returnee woman employed by an international NGO:

> Some challenges I face as a woman is men only want to do something for you if you are exploited by them. We do not get services that are available because of cultural norms [that stipulate that] a woman cannot make decision in the absence of a man….

However, remarkably, five (5) women stated when asked about the challenges that they face that they have "no problem." One single mother of one child simply stated that, "nothing affects me" while another single mother of one said she is "trying to adjust…the country is looking hard and the food problem can give us hard time….but then I experience nothing."

The feeling of psychological security also has to do with how the returnee is accepted by the community to which the person returned. Thus we asked the returnee women who participated in the study whether they considered themselves accepted back by most members of the community. Interestingly, a great majority, 44 women or 74.6% of participants said they felt accepted by the community, while only 8 (or 13.6%) actually indicated otherwise. 7 (or 11.9%) others could not be certain, and said they did not know. One such woman said, "I don't know much about them (the neighbours). I leave training at 5pm and may not get home till 7 or 8 pm…." Another woman in Monrovia said, "I don't really know. My life, I like to be alone. I've tried to be friendly, talked with them for God business, but they're not friendly. But they don't [disturb] me or harass me."

Others who said they felt accepted by the community narrated various acts of kindness by members of the community that made them feel accepted. For instance, one young girl of 16 said she felt accepted because, "one woman we don't know took my mother to the hospital when she was sick."
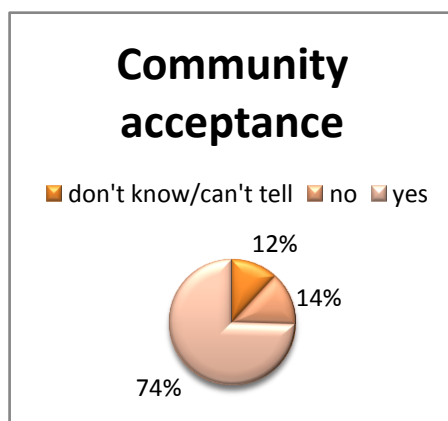
Fig 4.11 Respondents' views about the community's acceptance of them

Some of the women were able to identify reasons for their perceived (non-)acceptance by the community. These reasons are represented in Table 4.3 below and include both positive and negative experiences of community acceptance.

Table 4.3 Respondents' perceived reasons for (non-)acceptance by the community

Perceived reasons for (non-)acceptance by the community				
Response	Frequency	Percentage	cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
no response	33	55.9	33	55.9
we build Liberia together	4	6.8	37	62.7
no problem before	5	8.5	42	71.2
have identified with my people	3	5.1	45	76.3
they miss/love me	4	6.8	49	83.1
we live happily	2	3.7	51	86.4
I m likable/peaceful/friendly	3	5.1	54	91.5
I beg for food	1	1.7	55	93.2
don't curse/steal/confuse others	2	3.4	57	96.6
tribal issues	1	1.7	58	98.3
they give my children food	1	1.7	59	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2006.

In light of all the above social dynamics, it was pertinent to ask the women interviewed to assess for themselves their *feeling* of safety in the areas to which they have returned. Therefore, 39 women or 66 percent of the research participants said they felt safe in their respective areas of return, while 7 persons said they did not feel safe and 13 others were unsure. This seems consistent with the data on the returnees' sense of acceptance by their communities in the areas of return.

Some women commented on why they did or did not feel safe in their area. One woman in Monrovia said she felt safe "because I don't have anything that somebody will come and take." Another attributed her feeling of safety to the presence of the UNMIL who patrol her area. Others who said they felt safe still gave caveats that indicate that the feeling of safety is not absolute. One head of household with eleven dependents said although she felt safe as at the time of the interview, "sometimes [there is] small, small confusion….sometimes there are differences with the people of the other tribes, but that is part of life. On the overall, we are all fine." Another woman, a 55 year old widow with seven dependents said she felt safe, "only the latrine problem." And yet another, when asked if she felt safe simply said, "Yes. For now."

Some returnees however said they did not feel safe because of the general security problems affecting the entire community (see following analysis on general security problems). One woman said: "my fear is, there are armed robbers who steal and kill people, ritualistic killings, adults and children are reported missing on a daily basis…."

One 18 year old woman categorically states that her feeling of non-safety is closely linked to her non-acceptance by the members of the area in which she lives: "some people they can curse me, like when we don't get food and I go to their house and say please can you help me one cup of rice, then they start talking (cursing)…No, I don't feel safe because I don't have no friend there, no nothing."

4.3.2.5 Physical safety. The returnee women interviewed were asked to identify the security and safety problems that affect the area to which they returned. We asked for general security problems before going on to ask specifically how these problems affected them individually or affected their family and friends. In responding, ten of the women were able to enumerate more than one problem, while at least two mentioned up to four security problems.

From Figure 4. 12 below, it is obvious that about half of the women (31 women or 52.5%) said their community either had no security problems or they didn't know what these may be. It seems armed robbery (also called 'Isakabba' in slang) is the most cited security problem experienced in the return areas represented by this study, mentioned by fifteen women. Following this is ritual killing, also called 'heartmen' in the rural areas. This threat was mentioned by nine of the participants. Other security threats mentioned include theft, rape, tribal attacks, 'crimes against women and children', corrupt justice system that also sets perpetrators of crimes free, and murder or killing of people.
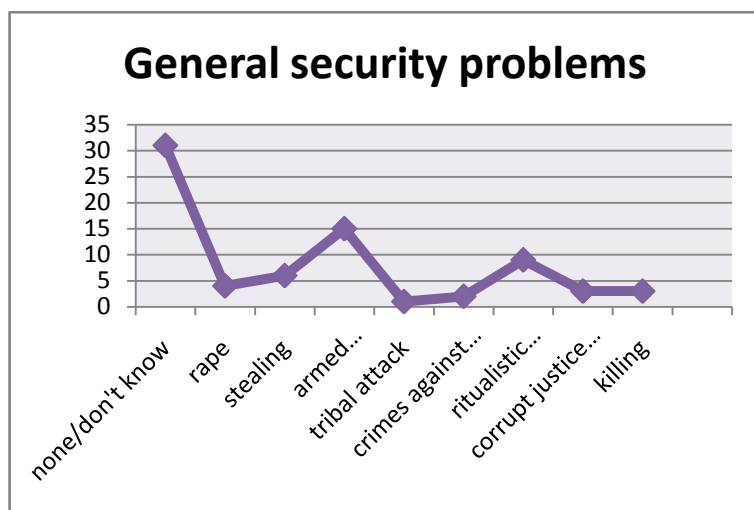
Fig 4.12 General security problems identified by returnee participants

It is interesting though that the women use some unique expressions to describe these issues. For example, one woman referring to rape said the perpetrators 'rape in a bad way', and another said 'rape is at a peak'. Another woman spoke of 'rumour of Mano and Gio people

planning to destroy the Mandingo to end the land business.' One woman mentioned 'violence against women that is not addressed by the proper authorities'. Referring to the ritualistic murders, one woman cited 'secret killings by unknown men.'

However, when asked whether these threats to safety have affected them or their own family, 22 of the women who responded said it had not affected them while 8 women admitted that they and their family had been affected by one or the other of the above mentioned security problems. 29 women did not respond. One of these affected women told us that: "seven armed men entered my sister's house searching for money. They took her money from her and raped her too. It was a gang rape by two men."

Of the eight women who had experienced security challenges, we asked how the situation was dealt with. Two of the women said they did not report to the authorities; two did not 'do anything' about the situation; two said they didn't have money to do anything; one said she reported to the police; while others said they didn't know what to do, or that the investigation was still ongoing, or that the perpetrators ran away. One returnee woman who said her friend had been affected told us, "the case was taken to authority but the victim did not have money to fight the case thereby she decided to forget it and focus on God."

Some of the participants further mentioned some of the threats to safety they experience as women both at home and in the community in the return environment in Liberia. These are namely rape, teenage pregnancy or 'girl motherhood', exploitation, incest and gender based violence. Some of these issues overlap, as one single mother of two told us in the story of a 13 year old girl known to her: "Father rapes daughter. I know of a girl about 13 years old, carrying pregnancy for her father. There are so many rape cases in that area. When I told the girl to report to me next time it happens, my mother said I should leave it that if they jail the father no one to care for the family." This case layers rape, child abuse, incest, teenage pregnancy and girl motherhood all in one.

Interestingly, one woman said men constitute a threat to women's safety. In her words: "Men have the notion of women being a property in home and community. Women are married and used for economic reason and not [allowed] to own property. [they are also] shared by parents." In addition, three women mentioned traditional practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting, early sex and early marriage as factors affecting women's safety and physical, psychological and social wellbeing.

In sum, the research participants were asked about their thoughts on whether women's and men's security problems were being adequately addressed. Only three women could definitely say yes, while seven other women said no. Thus when asked to mention security measures in place in their communities to protect women from GBV, one of the women who responded stated that, "for now there is no security measure put in place because perpetrators are found in communities and set free and [then are] threatening or mocking victims."

Other significant psycho- social challenges of reintegration identified from the unstructured interviews with various authorities include: stayees being resentful of those who left[38]; the perpetrators of gender based violence being the very persons and authorities- such as the chiefs, teachers- supposed to protect the people[39]; absence of the police in most returnee areas to check GBV; high prevalence of rape in returnee areas; high prevalence of other forms of GBV such as child molestation, domestic violence, wife beating, spousal abandonment, etc[40]; lack of access to water and sanitation facilities; lack of access to healthcare facilities due to long distances to clinics and health centres; lack of adequate school supplies and teachers[41], and; problems of access to education[42].

One psychosocial problem for reintegration that was not expressly stated by the returnee women themselves but that was identified by an NGO executive as having implications for economic reintegration is the returnees' dependency on aid, a carry over from the refugee camp mentalities.

4.3.3 Legal challenges

For this study, questions relating to the legal aspects of reintegration were framed with reference to access to legal processes and legal support or documentation for ownership of land, property and housing. This was also made to include legal documentation of citizenship status such as birth certificates.

Seventeen (17) women said they currently own land or houses while thirteen (13) others said they did not have any such property to speak of upon return. Of the number that claimed they own property, twelve (12) said they hold legal documentation for such property. However,

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[38] Interview with Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chair, held on October 2 2006 in his Monrovia office.
[39] Interview with staff of the International Rescue Committee, held October 7, 2006 in a home.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Interview with an LRRRC staff in Saclepea, Nimba County, held October 8, 2006 in his office.
[42] Interview with UNHCR Voinjama Community Services/GBV Assistant, held October 10, 2006 at the UNHCR Sub Office, Lofa County.

we asked the returnees interviewed on this issue whether such documentation was in their name or not. Only one woman said the documents are in her own name; one said the document was in her husband's name, and the other seven said the documents are in their father's name. When asked about this state of affairs, all of the women who responded to the question as above said the husband and fathers hold the documents because they are the head of the family. One woman said she did not have the documents because they got lost sometime during the war or in exile.

It is worthy of note that a larger number of women (23 women or 39%) said they and their family owned property before going into exile. However upon return, only twelve (12) said they had retrieved such land or landed property, while 10 said they were unable to get their land or house back. Those who had been unable to get their property back gave multiple reasons for this including that the house was destroyed during the war (three persons), the document for the property got missing (two persons), lack of money to pursue the case (three persons), somebody else had built on the land, lack of security in the area, the justice system not being favourable to their tribe, and negotiations still ongoing to get the land and houses back.
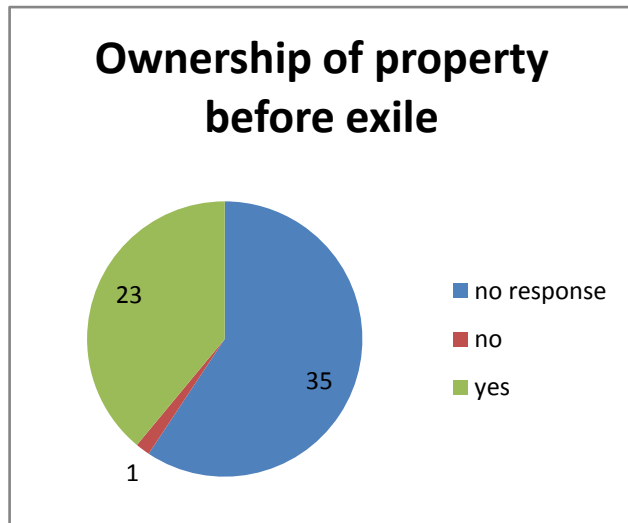
Fig 4.13 Distribution of returnees who owned property before exile

Concerning the ownership of other needed documentation such as birth certificates, identity cards, school certificates, travel documents, and so on, twenty three women were able to say they owned one document or the other, and they specified which they had.

Table 4.4 Respondents' ownership of personal documents

Ownership of other personal documents				
Response	frequency	Percentage	cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
None/no response	36	61	36	61
birth certificates	14	23.7	50	84.7
identity cards	4	6.8	54	91.5
school certificates	1	1.7	55	93.2
travel documents	3	5.1	58	98.3
has some but lost others	1	1.7	59	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2006.

Legal challenges identified by other interviewees recognize many of the issues raised by the returnees themselves, but also highlight some other issues sometimes in more specific terms. The NGO/UN staff interviewed stressed the existing gap in the provision of legal services as there are few qualified legal service providers in many of the remote or rural areas which also host the higher number of returnees. Other members of the legal system do not even know the laws, and the judges use their past experience and personal discretion to try cases. There is a lack of law books to consult, and the legal services providers are very poorly paid so they exploit the people who come to them for help. Lots of cases/ complaints get to the courts but the system is slow so the case dies down or the victim just lets go.

Property claims are also identified as constituting a major challenge for returnee reintegration in some areas. According to one key informant from the IRC, "women who own property with their husbands find it difficult to claim such if their husband abandons them…the law system also trivializes such cases…." In an interview with the one of the chiefs of the Mandingo tribe[43], he confessed that he "came because of the property 'business' [between the Mandingo and the other tribes in Nimba]. We never get our property, we're waiting for the people that can come and settle our property [dispute] who are still in Ganta. My family still in exile… I don't have means to bring them back from Ghana…my property business only the other problem I get."

The situation of the Mandingos in Nimba was clarified for the researcher by one LRRRC field staff in Saclepea. According to him, there was "no type of division before between the Mandingos [on the one hand] and the Mano and the Gio [on the other hand]." The Mandingo

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[43] Interview held October 8, 2006 at his home.

people had originally migrated down from Guinea and other neighbouring countries and settled peacefully over the years in the northern parts of Liberia becoming known for their success in entrepreneurial endeavours. However when the Mandingo supported the government of Samuel Doe in the first coup that rocked the country, "Samuel Doe declared the Mandingo citizens." As the war progressed the Mandingo was on the losing team and fled en masse to become refugees in surrounding countries. Unfortunately, "people deliberately occupied Mandingo lands so they will have no place *ever* again….[therefore] the problem of citizenship still exists for them.[44]"

4.3.4 Political aspects of reintegration

This section deals with the returnee women's participation in political processes both at the formal and informal level, their perception of the stability and efficacy of government and of their capacity to enjoy their rights on an equitable basis with men.

We asked the returnee women who participated in this study whether they participated in any of the elections held in Liberia in 2005, the year before this study. 24 women indicated that they took part in some or all of the elections, while 16 said they did not participate in any. Of the number that participated, 13 said they participated in the presidential elections; one said she participated in the presidential and senatorial elections; and others said they participated in all the elections.

Those who voted at any of the elections were asked whether they thought their vote made a difference to the outcome of the elections. Sixteen women affirmed their sense of political efficacy and said their vote made an impact on the electoral outcomes. Two women replied in the negative.

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[44] See note 4.

Participation in elections

no response ■   no ■   yes ■

32%
27%
41%
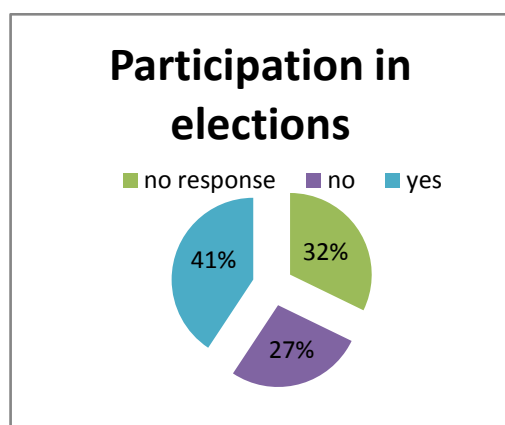
Fig 4.14 Returnee women's participation in elections

Some of the women who said they did not vote gave reasons for not participating in the elections. Four of them said they were underage at the time and either could not register or vote when the time came to do either. Others said they had just returned at the time of our interview and were not yet back at the time of the elections, or that they lost their voter registration card, and one woman said she did not participate because she was not interested. Others did not respond.

The returnee women were also asked about their involvement in political, community or other associations or organisations. Twenty women indicated that they are members of one organisation of the other. The table below shows the organisations they identified as belonging to.

Table 4.5 Various organisations returnee women participate in

Organizations returnee women belong to				
Response	frequency	Percentage	cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
no response	40	67.8	40	67.8
political party member	7	11.9	47	79.7
community organization	7	11.9	54	91.5
local NGO	1	1.7	55	93.2
church	1	1.7	56	94.9
international NGO staff	1	1.7	57	96.6
credit association	1	1.7	58	98.3
youth/women group	1	1.7	59	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2006.

In order to get information about the returnee women's perception of gender equity in government and other governance processes, they were asked to give their opinion on whether women in their communities or Liberia as a whole are adequately represented in public life. Most of the participants (49 women) could not respond competently to the question, but of the remaining number, six women thought women were adequately represented in public affairs, while, four said they did not agree or that women were "not yet" adequately represented. The same ten women who responded to the last question were further asked to express their opinions on whether women have the same opportunities as men to effectively participate in politics or to achieve political office. Five women said women have the same or equal opportunity as men, while another five women said women did not have the same access to political office as men.

However, when asked to identify the factors they consider as affecting the equitable participation of women in politics, only four women responded, mentioning the economy, reintegration challenges and low education as outstanding factors they feel influence women's involvement in politics. Consequently, three of them said educating girls would enhance the participation and involvement of more women in political/public affairs.

One of the returnee participants in this study attempted to assess the performance of the Sirleaf government, but stated her case in terms of the economic hardship and general security situation: "the price of food and other commodities have increased and [there is a] high rate of criminal activities." Four other women categorically stated that the current political system had not in any way affected the enjoyment of their rights. Others did not respond.

4.4 Specific socio-personal factors affecting returnee women's reintegration

A correlation analysis was carried out in order to ascertain the existence of a possible correlation between certain socio-personal variables and the reintegration of returnee women. Specifically, reintegration was considered in terms of the following specific components:

1. Economic aspects- Access to means of livelihood

2. Social-Psychological Aspects- Family support, physical security and psychological security.

3. Legal aspects- Access to legal processes.

4. Political aspects- questions related to political involvement.

5. The returnee's general assessment of her reintegration experience.

The following analysis is based upon these demarcations. The Pearson's correlation coefficient, Rho (r), is given as well as the probability value (or significant P) upon which the correlation decision will be taken. The decision rule is given below as:

Prob > |R| under Ho: Rho=0, where R is 0.05.

This means that where the probability value is greater then the error margin, there is no correlation between the variables being tested.

Table 4.6 Pearson Correlation Coefficients / Prob > |R| under Ho: Rho=0 / Number of Observations

	AL	FS	PHS	PSS	LP	PI	AR
Age	-0.17326	0.11547	-0.23229	0.19954	-0.38590	0.17064	-0.05295
	0.1934	0.4103	0.1292	0.1480	0.0201	0.2925	0.6930
	58	53	44	54	36	40	58
Lenght of displacement	0.11499	-0.06783	0.11510	-0.18752	0.04471	0.24446	-0.02413
	0.3943	0.6328	0.4624	0.1788	0.7987	0.1337	0.8586
	57	52	43	53	35	39	57
Education	0.01675	0.07472	0.09825	-0.08430	-0.03761	0.00870	0.19703
	0.9016	0.6023	0.5308	0.5524	0.8302	0.9581	0.1418
	57	51	43	52	35	39	57
Skills training	-0.01966	-0.00421	-0.21017	-0.07304	0.40139	-0.09180	0.13054
	0.8867	0.9771	0.1816	0.6142	0.0206	0.5783	0.3421
	55	49	42	50	33	39	55
Family support	0.03514	-0.17501	-0.20079	0.41891	0.18472	0.11060	-0.05978
	0.8146	0.2447	0.2268	0.0038	0.2956	0.5271	0.6898
	47	46	38	46	34	35	47
Government Policy	0.02278	-0.07671	0.11939	-0.10990	-0.01577	0.28029	0.02420
	0.8640	0.5851	0.4347	0.4289	0.9273	0.0798	0.8556
	59	53	45	54	36	40	59
Area of return	-0.11904	0.00184	0.05211	0.37115	-0.12949	0.17021	-0.11598
	0.3692	0.9895	0.7339	0.0057	0.4516	0.2937	0.3817
	59	53	45	54	36	40	59

Key: AL= access to livelihood; FS= family support; PHS= physical support; PSS= psychosocial security; LP=access to legal processes; PI = political involvement; AR= own assessment of reintegration.

For example:

Age and access to livelihood:

Where significant P = 0.1934, P > 0.05. Thus, r = 0.

Therefore there is no correlation between age and the returnee women's access to livelihood.

Analysis of Correlation matrix

It may be observed from the correlation matrix above that in most cases the significant P value is greater than the R value, indicating that most of the variables tested did not show any correlation with one another, thus r would be 0, based on the decision rule. However, there was correlation in four cases:

Age and access to legal processes:

Where, significant $P = 0.0201$, $P < 0.05$, and $r = -0.3859$.

This shows that not only is there correlation between the returnee women's age and their access to legal services, but the relationship is inverse, or negative. This means that as age ascends, access to legal processes reduces.

Skills training and access to legal processes:

Where significant $P = 0.0206$, $P < 0.05$, and $r = 0.4014$.

In this case, the women with skills are the ones with better access to legal processes.

Family support and psychological security:

Where significant $P = 0.0038$, $P < 0.05$, and $r = 0.4189$.

This indicates that the presence of family support gives the returnee women interviewed a great sense of psychological security.

Area of return and psychological security:

Where significant $P = 0.0057$, $P < 0.05$, and $r = 0.3712$.

This means that the area of return affects the returnee women's feeling of psychological safety.

4.5 Efforts made by various parties to address the challenges of reintegration

The information for answering this particular research question was garnered mainly from in-depth interviews with key informants and agency staff, and other documentary sources during field work in Liberia.

4.5.1 Government efforts. The Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) is the chief government agency charged with responsibility for Liberian returnees. It has its headquarters in Monrovia and offices in all the returnee areas that were studied in this research. The LRRRC was created by the Act to Make Provision for Refugees and to Establish the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, 1993. Its mandate covers refugees from other countries within Liberia, internally displaced persons, and Liberian returnees and, according to the Program Officer,[45] is also the government agency for ensuring compliance with the Geneva Conventions.

Specifically, the Repatriation Office of the LRRRC is responsible for receiving returnees arriving from the country of asylum, and for ensuring their repatriation "in safety and dignity". This is defined by the agency's representatives as being able to "create a conducive atmosphere free from harassment and other problems." The Repatriation Office of the LRRRC also ensures that returnees receive the assistance that is due to them[46]. The Information Office of the agency also publishes a bimonthly newsletter, the *LRRRC Activities Update*, which disseminates information about the progress in the repatriation and reintegration efforts of the organisation. Appendix B contains the newsletter containing up-to-date information about the progress of return at the time of fieldwork.

In the field, the efforts of the LRRRC field supervisors include: liaising with other organisations to mobilize communities to participate in reintegration; monitoring agencies involved in various aspects of reintegration; coordinating activities of agencies through periodic meetings; facilitate reintegration by mobilizing the communities for successful reintegration projects; legal protection[47].

However when asked about the organisation's handling of cases of people who fled into exile due to personal persecution, the organisation's program officer asserted that *if* such people exist they would still be asylum seekers. However, in an apparent allusion to the situation of

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[45] Interview with Program officer for the LRRRC, held September 22, 2006, at the LRRRC office in Monrovia.
[46] Interview with Repatriation officer for LRRRC, held September 22, 2006, at the LRRRC office in Monrovia.
[47] Interview with an LRRRC Field Supervisor, Saclepea, Nimba county, held October 8, 2006 in his office.

the Mandingos in Nimba County, he admitted that in their work at the LRRRC, they have come across such people especially in the counties where the war started or where there are "divisions," further identified as "minorities." The government's efforts to alleviate this situation include a Land and Property Commission and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. According to one of the LRRRC's officers:

> Some people in some communities still have…disputes. The government and traditional leaders are trying to solve this and to find political solutions… Peace exists in the communities and people who came back returned voluntarily. The Legal Protection Section [of the LRRRC] assists returnees with legal issues such as land, property encroachment.

To all intents and purposes, it seems the only effort exerted by the government generally and the LRRRC specifically with respect to this category of returnees is the Protection Core Group and Protection Review and Referral Committee. These are described as the forum created by UNHCR in conjunction with other agencies/partners as an "umbrella group" for monitoring cases of GBV and related incidences arising from the field. Unfortunately, the activities of this group do not extend backwards to conflict related cases and also the Committee does not have enforcement powers and can only refer cases to the relevant agency to handle[48].

However the government of Liberia does have a Ministry of Gender and Development (MOGD) established by an Act of Senate and the House of Representatives in 2003 to function within the executive branch of government.

This Ministry plays an important role in charting the post-war position of Liberian women and has already taken a lead role in the protection of women. Although this researcher was unable to get an audience with the honourable Minister, I was invited to attend one of the meetings of the Gender Based Violence Inter agency Taskforce (hereafter referred to as the National GBV Taskforce) comprising the Ministry of Gender as the Chair of the Taskforce and all other agencies concentrated in return areas and working in the thematic areas of protection from GBV and GBV related complications. Appendix C contains the attendance list from the minutes of meeting showing the spread of agencies involved. The GBV Taskforce meeting proved to be the best place to get information from workers in the field with respect to women's experiences, government's efforts and shortcomings and the specific challenges faced by the participating agencies.

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[48] Interview with LRRRC Protection Officer, held October 9, 2006 in his office in Monrovia.

At the meeting[49] I learnt that the Ministry of Justice, through the police, arrests perpetrators of rape and prosecutes such cases. The Ministry of Gender and Development has also put forward a National Plan of Action to Address Gender Based Violence (GBV) which maps out its strategy for tackling GBV in all its forms in Liberia. The national GBV Taskforce has also expended effort to produce a simplified version of the new rape law passed December 29, 2005. A copy of this can be found in Appendix D. The simplified version will be pocket sized and presented in various formats, and will also be disseminated as widely as possible so that women and men all over the country can have access to it. Furthermore the Taskforce, led by the MOGD has also created a monthly report form (Appendix E) for GBV cases occurring across the country in order to generate a database and gender specific statistics that could be used for future planning. The Ministry also officially celebrated with the international community on November 25, 2006 Sixty Years of Campaigning against Violence against Women, thereby linking Liberian women struggles with global women struggles.

The efforts of the National GBV Taskforce are replicated in the various counties and I was again invited to attend the GBV meeting while collecting data in Voinjama[50], Lofa County. At this meeting also, various governmental and non governmental agencies were represented and shared their efforts, frustrations and needs. At that meeting I learnt that the forms designed by the national taskforce for reporting and compiling statistics on GBV was also being promoted in Voinjama for the various agencies to participate. Furthermore, the Voinjama GBV coordinating group was also making plans to take part in the United Nations declared "16 Days of Activism against Violence Against Women" planned to begin from November 25 (the annual international Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) and end December 10 (the annual commemoration of Human Rights Day).

The taskforce meeting is also a forum for participating agencies to share their own varied efforts at addressing the challenges of return in the communities where they have operations. At the Voinjama meeting, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) announced that it was planning training workshops on GBV in Foya and Koilahun districts (also in Lofa County). The IRC was also at the time engaged in awareness-raising about sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in schools. The latter effort was based on the organisation's experience with SEA cases that indicate that many of the perpetrators they identify are school teachers.

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[49] Held October 5, 2006 at the Conference Room of the Ministry of Gender and Development, Monrovia.
[50] The meeting was held October 11, 2006 at the UNMIL premises in Voinjama.

In addition to being participants in the Ministry of Gender – led GBV taskforce, the various agencies represented are also members of a Human Rights Monitoring group.

Another significant government agency for addressing the challenges of post conflict reconstruction and development is the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE). The organisation was born out of the need for funds for post war rehabilitation of infrastructure in spite of the constraints of external indebtedness that made it impossible for the Liberian government to benefit from the World Bank's programs. It was in this vein that the LACE was established under a July 2004 Community Empowerment Act to administer a $6 billion grant from the World Bank. The agency's mandate is to use the grant to help the communities help themselves to rehabilitate. Therefore, this agency came under the purview of this research because these are the communities to which returnee refugees return. The main objective of the LACE is, in the words of the LACE Program Manager, "community driven development through community empowerment[51]."

Another government agency whose work is related to the reintegration of returnee refugees is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC), established by an Act of the legislature in June 2005. The TRC has the responsibility of attending to the psychosocial needs of returning refugees; no other agency is particularly equipped to offer the promise of promoting "national healing." The vision of the TRC as articulated for this researcher by the TRC Chair, Counsellor Jerome J. Verdier is:

> Truth, which is the basis for Reconciliation…the truth of what happened in Liberia has to be known and understood which makes reconciliation possible. In Liberia, over the two decades of conflict there have been various accounts of what actually happened; there has been no national, historical account [and] other accounts have been told from the perspective of various actors with their own stakes involved….Liberians can now have the opportunity to move forward.

The value of the work of the TRC to reintegration and reconciliation is that the Commission will document "the root causes of the conflict for posterity and provide a forum for perpetrators and victims to share their experiences and promote healing and provoke national empathy."

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[51] Interview with LACE Program Manager, Monrovia, held 16 October 2006 in his office.

4.5.2. Non-government efforts. The UNHCR is the agency next to the government in terms of importance to return and reintegration of refugees. In remote areas of the country like Lofa County, which is also the area of highest refugee return, the UNHCR may be the most visible and/or authoritative structure of governance on the ground. According to the UNHCR Reintegration Officer in Voinjama, Lofa County, reintegration activities in Lofa commenced in 2004, even before (organised) repatriation which started in February 2005, and at a time when there were very few relief agencies on the ground there. The implications were that UNHCR was "obliged" to handle so many governance and reintegration activities in the areas of health, education, agriculture, shelter distribution, income generation, skills training, road rehabilitation to facilitate repatriation, and so on –all of which the organisation is still involved in.

Between 2004 and the time of data collection for this research (October 2006), the UNHCR's reintegration activities in Lofa particularly, included: rehabilitation of 31 schools, establishment and running of 14 clinics, implementation of 151 agricultural projects with partners, distribution of 3500 shelter kits, running of 42 income generation programs, provision of water, sanitation and healthcare facilities amongst others[52]. The UNHCR also organized the repatriation of 48,350 Liberian refugees from Sierra Leone and Guinea and provided them with an assistance package which included transport from the country of asylum; transport allowance to their area of return from the transit centre in Liberia; basic food items (supplied by the World Food Program, WFP) including two months' rations in the first instance and then another two months' ration subsequently; and basic non- food items including blankets, plastic sheets, cooking set, mattress, bucket, water tank, plastic mat.

However, an approximate 100,000 more refugees had returned 'spontaneously' without waiting for or receiving UNHCR repatriation assistance, but whom the organisation claims are able to benefit from the various reintegration projects.

In addition the UNHCR has "from the beginning involved the communities so that other development agencies (such as the UNDP) can have a basis to work with later." The organisation has been able to achieve community involvement through its community empowerment projects (CEPs). These are implemented by the UNHCR's implementing partners (IPs) in various sectors of reintegration and development.

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[52] UNHCR Briefing Notes, UNHCR Sub Office Voinjama, 5 September 2006.

With reference to the social and psychological aspects of reintegration, the UNHCR community services unit and Protection unit operate the local GBV group, called the Protection Core Group (in Voinjama) and partners with the IRC as the implementing partner for SGBV[53]. Therefore, cases of SGBV are referred to the relevant agency or IP to handle and psychosocial counselling also conducted. Also, the UNHCR is conducting programs to sensitize people about SGBV issues such as rape, domestic violence, etc.

The challenges and efforts of the UNHCR as it relates to the judicial system are being addressed and complemented by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in cooperation with other actors. UNMIL was established in 2003 to support the implementation of a ceasefire and a peace process in Liberia, and as at the start of September 2006 had over 14,800 military and police personnel in the country (UN News Service, 26 September 2006). UNMIL, among other things has assigned a public prosecutor to Lofa County to make up for the acute shortage of qualified manpower in the post war judicial system.

In an interview with this individual (the UNMIL Legal officer for Lofa County), he outlined the various means by which the legal office of the UNMIL fulfils its mandate. The UNMIL monitors courts, sits in on cases and tries to ensure that the rule of law and international standards as well as the laws of the land (Liberia) are observed. The office assesses legal capacity and then trains magistrates, court clerks, etc. nationwide; buys legal materials needed; updates the magistrates on some laws; participates in a Law Reform Commission which reviews some of the (existing) laws such as the rape law, the new jury law, the judiciary autonomy law and so on; gives legal advice to members of the government, the President, the UNMIL itself, amongst other things.

Another agency involved in the post-war rehabilitation and reintegration of Liberians is the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with its head office in Monrovia and activities in Lofa, Montserrado, and Nimba. It seems the IRC's reach is so pervasive and widespread in the counties visited for this study because the name of the organisation turned up in one way or the other in virtually all our interviews with returnees, stayees, government personnel, UN staff and other agencies.

The IRC's program involves case management, provision of medical facilities, psychosocial management, legal referrals (especially outside Montserrado), and social work. They also

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[53] The UNHCR prefers the use of the term SGBV to the more generally accepted term, GBV.

provide safe houses for extreme cases of abuse and plan rehabilitation for children without parents. The IRC's Child Protection Department is especially involved in providing foster homes and/or orphanages for vulnerable children though they are particularly wary of remanding such children to orphanages that are not monitored by any agency, government or other wise. Medical cases arising from these are usually referred to Montserrado.

The IRC also engages in community awareness activities, working with women groups and establishing women centres and empowering the women involved to become active in community awareness and outreach activities. The agency is also an active participant in the Ministry of Gender-led National GBV Taskforce, and its teams outside the capital[54]. The IRC works with other agencies like OXFAM, ARV, and other local but "strong" NGOs in achieving its objectives. They also provide skills training for women which include giving them a "full package" including the resources and tools the women would need to start up on their own after training.

In Nimba County, the IRC is extensively involved in the protection of women and children, as well as in a range of other activities that give weight to the importance of the agency in that area which is also a major returnee area. The agency had been involved in reintegration activities with a marked emphasis on GBV issues since about 2004, beginning with the disarmament and rehabilitation of women and girls associated with the war and fighting forces (WAWFF). After disarmament the IRC embarked on various programs in the communities that provided the women and girls with counselling and other reintegration assistance. The agency provided skills training, education support, economic opportunity programs, and when needed they partner with some other agency/agencies to provide the necessary support.

In addition, the IRC provides capacity building skills or training for NGOs, community leaders, women, boys, girls, and other groups. The capacity building activities of the IRC also extends to other (government) areas such as the security sector, and the legal sector, which is identified as posing a big challenge to their agency's work in many ways. They also provide psychosocial programming, assist Ministry of Health clinics in the area of case management, but refer many cases to the Medicines sans Frontier (MSF) which has a comprehensive program for rape victims.

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[54] See above on the GBV group in Lofa for the IRC's activities in that area.

The IRC in Nimba County runs a program called Survival Support for Every Woman which is designed for what the then Nimba County GBV coordinator calls the "extremely vulnerable". The program is not intended to spoon feed the women that are targeted but simply to provide them with a small grant for business that would make them self reliant. In the same vein, the agency works with women groups everywhere they work, providing these groups with training that would make them useful to their communities even in the absence of any NGO:

> We work with women's groups too which are in almost every location that we work. Because IRC cannot be everywhere, we train these groups to be useful at the community levels, especially to be useful where there is no NGO. These women groups are the ones who take the lead for community awareness programs.

Similarly, the IRC trained women's groups in Bomi County to enable ordinary women, even though illiterate, to give psychosocial counselling to other women.

The IRC is also engaged in educating children in the communities about child abuse and GBV due to the exceptionally high incidence of child abuse. These awareness raising activities may include daily, house to house visits, and usually intensify when there is a fresh spate of cases of abuse in the community. It seems the IRC focuses a lot of attention on the community awareness programs and self reliance projects.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is another international NGO also engaged in various reintegration activities in Liberia. Like the IRC, ADRA's reach could be seen in the counties visited for this research, specifically in Nimba, Lofa and Montserrado counties. ADRA's programs in Liberia cover various sectors including education, agriculture, water and sanitation, delivery of food aid, emergency relief, disaster preparedness, economic and community development, infrastructure and peace building (ADRA/Liberia Country Profile, 2006).

Specifically, the organisation contributes to resettlement and rehabilitation of returnee refugees and IDPs in their areas of return. Beginning from 1998, the organisation began a series of resettlement assistance projects including rehabilitating/rebuilding 45 schools in five counties, providing tools and seeds to farmers, providing revolving funds for income generation, installation of hand pumps at water wells, and renovation of a health clinic (ADRA, 2006).

The main beneficiaries of the agency's food and agriculture programs are farmers, returnees and refugees (in Liberia), and these persons are provided with seeds, tools, livestock restocking. Other program beneficiaries include IDPs, ex-combatants, mothers, single parents, female headed households, children and the elderly- depending on the specific program being executed. For example the school feeding program is especially for primary school children, income generation and micro credit programs target business women, and so on. Some programs include women as a specific target group, other programs are for both men and women, and some others are specifically for girl students. This indicates that the organisation plans and implements programs for a broad spectrum of the post war society, showing evidence of gender inclusiveness in its work.

In addition to the information provided by the representatives of all the agencies identified above, the youth leader at Saclepea identified some of the efforts being made by various organisations that were having appreciable impact. According to him, "the community is benefiting a whole lot from NGOs" especially UNHCR through its implementing partners. For example, the UNHCR provides returnee transportation from the country of origin in partnership with GTZ; oversees the management of transit stations in partnership with the ICRC; provides per diem for resettlement after return and; distributes other non-food items.

According to this young community leader, in addition to the UNHCR's efforts, other agencies also contribute to the community of Saclepea and its surrounding areas. ADRA renovated schools and clinics that had been broken down in all the districts of Nimba County. The UNHCR also renovated schools in partnership with ZOA. Water and sanitation, specifically, hand pumps and latrines were provided by Action Fund (ACF). The UNDP and the YMCA were also providing training programs for war affected youth to help them to be useful. They are taught skills like carpentry, car mechanics, tailoring, soap-making, tie-dye, and computer skills. The Bangladeshi contingent of the UNMIL then stationed in the area also contributed their quota to youth development by organising sporting programs for the young people. Interestingly, some individual members of the community are also said to contribute to the post war effort.

Furthermore, the youth leader observed that as part of repatriation activities to bring refugees back to Liberia, the UNHCR was compelled to build a major road that leads straight to Cote d'Ivoire. According to him, the road "has done a lot of good for us here." This information validates that given by the UNHCR's reintegration officer in Voinjama that such projects

were carried out as part of reintegration activities and begun even before repatriation itself commenced.

In order to provide education for the large number of unemployed and largely illiterate young people, the UNDP helps through the YMCA by subsidising school for them. The government also has a free tuition school in the area. The school is a special school so that young people left behind educationally by the war can be in class with their age-mates. These efforts are further supplemented by the government's literacy program.

It is also worthy of note that the government of Liberia has a Ministry of Youth and Sports that espouses commitment to improving the status of young people in the country. In August 2005, the Ministry of Youth and Sports organised a National Youth Policy Conference to involve youth representatives from all over the country in the drafting of a national youth policy for Liberia to guide the new administration. The Kakata Declaration, which was the outcome statement of the Conference, laid the foundation for the eventual youth policy.

One means by which the various agencies in Liberia work with the local people is through the District Development Committees (DDCs). According to the DDC (Voinjama) representatives, the DDC was established by the UNDP and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to "bring power to the grassroots." The Committee monitors projects carried out by the NGOs, evaluate and report on these projects to ensure that there is accountability. They also receive information from the people in their communities about their needs and channel these to UNDP and other relevant NGOs/agencies.

Also in Voinjama, I was able to identify one community empowerment project funded by the UNHCR but managed by women and operated by them with a sense of ownership. The Voinjama District Women Organization for Peace and Development (VODWOPEDE) engages in adult literacy programs, skills training in tailoring, soap-making, bread-making, tie-dye, and agricultural programs. The main target is all war affected women including ex-combatants and returnees, most of which are young women. The program is open to anybody at all from anywhere (and some come from as far away as Koilahun, another town). The women are not required to pay anything to learn, but the organisation generates its own funds to keep running.

Although there were a lot of activities going on in Liberia at the time of this research, the above represents the information personally collected by this researcher from various agencies and persons about the various efforts at ensuring reintegration and rehabilitation of returnees and their communities.

4.6 Returnee women's knowledge of, and participation in the governance of reintegration

The questions we asked the returnee women in this section had to do with their knowledge about and involvement in certain processes of reintegration from the decision to return, to the governance of service provision and security issues.

Since reintegration begins with the decision to return, we asked the returnee women about their participation in taking the decision to return: who made the decision for you to return when you did? The majority of women, 69.5% or 41 women said they made the decision themselves. Four women said they took the decision with their husband, and another four women said their mother took the decision to return and they followed. One woman followed her boyfriend back, three took the decision with the family, two women said their sisters made the decision to return, and two others said the UN (UNHCR) made the decision for them to return. Two did not respond. Relatedly, the participants in the research were asked whether they repatriated voluntarily. Thirty women (or 50.8%) said they did, while four women said they did not return voluntarily.

In terms of access to information to make the decision to return, forty four women also said they had access to adequate and relevant information on the situation in Liberia while in the country of asylum before making the decision to return; another nine said they did not. However when we asked: did the information you received in the country of asylum correspond to the reality you found in Liberia after your return? 31 women (or 52.5%) said they got the right information, while 16 (27.1%) said they did not have the correct or accurate information about conditions in Liberia.

After giving information about their access to various economic programs and social services, the returnee women interviewed for this study were then asked about their knowledge of programs that would affect their access to needed services and enhance their reintegration. In terms of matters pertaining to livelihood, we asked if they knew about any programs available to acquire loans, seeds, and such to start up a business or farming

activities. Only three (3) women gave a definitive positive answer, while 36 women did not know, and 20 other women said there were no programs. This means then that 23 women had some knowledge about the availability of these economic programs in their area.

When asked about their knowledge of efforts being made by the people and other authorities and agencies to improve availability and accessibility of healthcare facilities in their area, 41 women did not know what was going on, while 18 women did. Of this number, 11 said there were no such efforts, while 7 women said there were such programs being carried out in their community. When asked further whether they participated in the planning and implementation of any of these programs, three women said they did. Six women indicated also that they had benefited from the efforts to improve healthcare services in their area.

Concerning access to water, the majority of returnee women who responded (33 women) already said they did not get sufficient water to meet their daily personal, household and sanitation needs. However, only 13 women had any knowledge about the existence of efforts being made by persons and agencies in their communities to improve the availability of potable water. Of these, six said such programs existed, seven said there were no such programs, and 46 did not know. Only one woman said the existence of such efforts significantly improved her access to water. Six other women said there was no improvement in their access to water because the pumps were too few, because of the high population in their area, because the water did not reach every part of the community, and due to 'donor guidelines'.

With respect to security of lives and property, we asked the returnees about their knowledge of the agencies/authorities responsible for handling security problems. Only four women had knowledge of this and mentioned some of the authorities responsible for maintaining security or addressing security problems. 55 women did not respond. Those who responded cited the government, UNHCR, UNMIL, community leaders and civil society as being in charge of security of lives and property. When asked about security measures existing in the community designed to specifically protect women and girls from gender based violence only one woman was able to cite one example of such measures, two said they did not exist, while others did not know. Following from the above, it was not surprising that only two women said they knew someone who had successfully used the security measures in their community.

In terms of the legal system, only four women said they had knowledge about how the system works. Eight women said they did not, while the others did not respond. Consequently, only two women said they felt safe or confident using the existing legal system.

The above sums up the information gathered on returnee women's knowledge of, access to, and participation in measures meant to address various aspects of their reintegration.

4.7 Governance issues arising from the data

The governance issues arising from the discussion of the above subjects with the returnees and other agencies involved in their reintegration have to do with government (non-) performance, the management of the processes of return and reintegration, interagency cooperation and coordination, challenges faced by the agencies involved in the processes of reintegration, and the involvement of the communities themselves in the entire process.

4.7.1 Government (non-) performance. Many of the challenges identified by the returnee women as affecting their reintegration have to do with government (non-)performance. Every key informant interviewed for this research agreed that the government still needed to build capacity in many areas. Many NGO staff expressed frustrations of communication with government agencies and ministries sometimes, and one mentioned for instance that the Ministry of Gender tries to take ownership of initiatives suggested to it although the Ministry is lacking in resources.

In several other instances government security personnel display a lack of understanding of the issues affecting women in returnee areas. In one instance, according to one NGO spokesperson, when perpetrators of crimes affecting women's reintegration are caught or detained, the police may insist that they should be freed, while magistrates may demand payment from the complainant to hear the case. Also, in the process of police investigations, they sometimes interview the perpetrator in the same room as they interview the victim, and at the same time.

This matter also arose at the National GBV Taskforce meeting this researcher attended in Monrovia. It was reported from the minutes of the last meeting that police officers were visiting health centres demanding to interrogate raped children. The group observed that this was usually the case when the perpetrator of the rape crime is elite of some sort, and also occurs in those areas of the country where the clinic does not have a women and children protection unit. It was further reported that in Maryland a security man at one of the NGO-

run clinics was arrested by the police for refusing to allow the police in. Most interesting of all was the clarification that was given by a Deputy Minister for Justice who was present at the meeting that day.

According to the Minister,

> The laws of rape state that when rape occurs and there is a suspect, [the rape] must be reported to the police…then a suspect is arrested…then the victim is taken for medical attention while the police continues investigation…the medical report is a part of the police report. The police [must] gather information and then the state takes the matter to court….

The concern of the NGO staff present however was not the legal and procedural explanation given by the Minister, and they insisted that if the police continue the intimidation of health and social workers fewer people will seek the services offered by the NGOs in that sector, services that the government is not yet equipped to adequately provide.

The government's incapacity in this area is further demonstrated in more manifest ways. When asked about the extent to which perpetrators get their justice, one NGO worker in Nimba County stated that lots of cases actually get to court but the system delays so the case eventually "dies down" and grows cold, or the victim just lets go. The informant gave an example of reporting four cases in one week, and according to this person, "as we speak, all four persons are out of court although the law says no bail for rape cases." The informant concluded that the judges still do not apply the new rape law. For example, the judge in that particular district, "though female seems not to want to change the old order of things." It seems also that the judge "did not go through proper law school training but due to the scarcity of persons, she's there."

Interestingly, the same complaint we heard in Nimba was also echoed in Voinjama as this researcher was told that some magistrates and circuit court judges do not acknowledge the new rape law. According to our informant, many magistrates think the legislation is "rubbish." In fact at the GBV meeting this researcher attended in Voinjama, Lofa County, the magistrate's representative at the meeting actually said "some so-called rape cases is not rape, but breach of contract as when a girl meets a boy at a night club…." He was interrupted by a bevy of protests from many present and silenced accordingly – at least for the moment. However, one knowledgeable key informant did acknowledge that some aspects of the new rape law are "unclear" and "confusing" which may account for why members of the judicial system ignore it sometimes.

Also as in Nimba County, some cases stay too long waiting for trial and the victims "get fed up." When asked to identify the main challenge facing the psychosocial reintegration of returnees in that area, one UNHCR worker stated that the judicial system is the main problem, as it had not been able to handle cases arising satisfactorily. The weakness of the judicial system was apparent from various interactions with the people in the returnee areas visited: in Voinjama, no single prosecution of any perpetrators known to our key informant, a member of the judiciary; no holding cells in Voinjama and so people can escape from arrest; judicial officers were mostly new and the system was still rudimentary; lack of a city solicitor in all the seven magisterial areas in Lofa County because all the solicitors prefer to stay and work in Monrovia; and related abnormalities in the post war system.

Closely related to the incapacity of the judicial system is the incapacity of the security system and police force. The discussion at the national GBV meeting already highlighted some of the issues related to the non rights – regarding process by which the police go about its work. In responding to a question on security in Saclepea, Nimba County, one of our informants identified some of the continuing problems related to the governance of security in the area. In the first place, there were a limited number of law enforcement agents because due to ongoing training at the time, few law enforcement officers had been deployed. This also made it difficult to effect an arrest if one goes to the police station to report any thing. In some communities in that area, people refuse or ignore court orders because there are no police officers to arrest them.

As at the time of this study, there were only two (2) police officers in a district with 92 communities, and these two officers were stationed at the district headquarters, whereas there are towns and communities that are about 45 to 50 kilometres away from the headquarters. The rhetorical question asked by the key informant was, "so what happens to the incidences occurring in the outlying areas?" Saclepea itself however has three police officers and the help of Civilian Police (CIVPOL) when needed. However, unlike some other towns or districts, Saclepea does not have community police. The community police in other places consist of persons recommended by the local authorities and trained by the national police to represent the national police in the communities. Official information received indicates that there is a reduction in the crime rate where there is the presence of a community police.

In Voinjama, one of the complaints expressed by one of the law enforcement agents in attendance was that the terrible road conditions hamper the ability of the police to gather

evidence from the field in order to assist the state in prosecuting criminal cases. The representative said he did not have even a bicycle for moving from one village to the other. The indication from this is that even where the police existed (it may be noted that Voinjama is a major town in Lofa County), they did not have the necessary equipment to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently.

In those areas where persistent lack of attention has led to neglect compared to other places, the situation is compounded by the fact that the people's representatives in the government "stay in Monrovia…they come down [to the communities] to say all the sweet things to get [elected], then they stay in Monrovia. Even the land problem [in Nimba] they stay in Saniquellie and Ganta only, they don't come to Saclepea…." This sentiment was echoed by another informant, also in Saclepea, who noted that the committee set up by the government to resolve the land problems in that area had become part of the problem, as members of the committee were taking sides on the issue, and were not neutral as the committee's mandate requires.

4.7.2 Governance or management of return and reintegration. The above discussion of various aspects of the post conflict governance in Liberia has direct bearing on the governance or management of the return and reintegration process for returnees. The experience of returnees in the return and reintegration phase has peculiar governance dimensions that we uncovered in interviews with the various key informants in this study.

As indicated in some of the interviews with the returnee women, many of their current challenges of reintegration stemmed from the way their return was engineered, or induced by various external forces. According to one former returnee woman, who returned to Liberia in the year 2000 when the conflict had not ended, they were compelled to leave Cote d'Ivoire when their jobs were taken away and the government there decided that Liberian children should attend Ivorien schools and be taught in French. So the family came back to Liberia for the children's sake, even though according to the informant, Ivory Coast was not bad for her as she had a job as a refugee teacher, and her husband had a job as a field assistant for one of the international NGOs.

In the return phase under study (2003-2006), the challenges of return were compounded for the returnees because of the inaccurate information they received in the country of asylum about conditions in Liberia. According to one key informant, the people were not given "factual information" wherever they were in exile, as they were not frankly told of the

differences of life in the country of asylum and at home because they (UN and the government) "didn't want to make the people afraid to return home." An indirect admission of this fact was given by one UNHCR staff who told this researcher that the organisation is using "reintegration strategically to facilitate repatriation." This was clarified to mean that "by focusing on the needs of Liberian refugees from the camps, we address these needs and thus encourage repatriation."

In an interesting manifestation of the inability to neither stay in Liberia nor go back to the country of asylum, some "returnees" in Lofa County are reported as moving back and forth between Liberia and Guinea especially – a phenomenon referred to as back-flows in the literature. These returnees go and come with different registration numbers each time because they want to do business with the food and non food materials they get. According to our informant who works in the repatriation sector, this has been possible because, the main culprits are Mandingo people, whilst the person(s) registering refugees in the camp in Guinea is also Mandingo and can be manipulated to re-register someone. The reality is that the UNHCR in that place had no "solid" database prior to the pre-registration for repatriation.

Unfortunately however, while some people are able to return several times and receive multiple repatriation packages, some others cannot return: "…the really vulnerable are not noticed, and are not cared for, and have not returned." According to one UNHCR officer in Voinjama, one of the main challenges to reintegration may be that so many female refugees tend to remain in the camps – especially the vulnerable ones – because they do not want to return to Lofa. Another LRRRC staff pointed out further that the elderly have nobody to take care of them. Persons classified as "spontaneous returnees" by UNHCR also are disadvantaged on return because, unlike the sponsored returnees, they do not have access to any individual return assistance package; rather they are expected to simply "benefit from community projects."

The issue of governance continually arises even for UNHCR- assisted or sponsored returnees in order for them to access needed services. According to one repatriation monitor in Lofa County, the distance the returnees have to go to get their second tranche feeding is too far and "on the way anything can happen to the ladies, and if a man says he wants to help you, anything can happen." The distance described by the informant is about an hour's journey if a vehicle takes you partway up to a point and then there is still some long distance to trek and back, carrying the rations.

In another twist to the problem of getting rations, it may be noted that returnees are given tarpaulin sheets to (temporarily) roof and cover their houses. One key informant observes that women are "given tarpaulin to cover their house but they cannot pay for the men who will put the house together, so [the women] may be sexually exploited." Relatedly, our source also observes that "we give skills in areas of high return. But in those remote areas, even those skills are not very marketable…." As one UNHCR official describes this problem, "there is no formal channel to utilize the skills and experience of returnees in rehabilitating their remote or isolated communities." The fact is that Monrovia is the economic and social hub of Liberia and many of our sources confirm that most agencies and opportunities are concentrated there.

A couple of LRRRC staff in separate interviews also acknowledged that skills training remained a major problem for reintegration. In Monrovia, we were told that the UNHCR had to terminate its contract relationship with the Africa Development Alternatives (ADA) by the end of October 2006 due to "financial non- accountability". ADA is the organisation contracted to handle skills training there, but returnees had been complaining that they did not even have access to the facility.

This research also uncovered a pertinent issue related to skills training that indicates the intense gender contestation that disadvantages some, and benefits others, particularly males and females. Appendix F shows the UNHCR's vocational skills training programme in a particular centre in Monrovia over a nine month period, and the spread of training. The most obvious observation is the gender disparity, as females trained in the period amounted to 286, and males were a total of 454. This indicates that up to 40% more males got training compared to their female counterparts. A second and equally pertinent observation is the kind of training given. Males were overwhelmingly given training in computers, electronics, and sent to school, while females were disproportionately represented in the training for beautification and tailoring. It would seem that women returnees get trained in traditionally 'female' skills and men got skills in areas already male-dominated.

Another aspect of reintegration perceived as constituting a blind spot in the governance of return and reintegration in Liberia is the issue of psychosocial support for returnees. In most cases officers of prominent government and non-government agencies had little to say about efforts in this area. In fact, one government official interviewed claimed that if there were actually returnees with problems of individual persecution in wartime, they would still be

asylum seekers and could not have returned. However, others admit that there is a gap in psychosocial protection as not many agencies are directly involved in these issues.

By way of elucidating the point, while the LRRRC for example claims to address the specific needs of women and girls, the organization does not have a women and children's unit or gender office or officer. Instead the issues affecting this category of persons are subsumed under the Protection Office, and also GBV focal persons are appointed in all the regional offices that monitor and report such issues to the Protection Office. The same office also admits that there is a gap in the psychosocial aspects of returnee refugee reintegration as there are not many agencies involved in carrying out psychosocial counseling and other services.

One other psychosocial factor affecting returnees in their areas of return was the attitude of the stayees towards them. One of our key informants in Nimba County describes the situation there in which scholarships are given to those associated with fighting forces, and this preferential treatment has brought friction in the communities. According to this person, the stayees and other members of the community ask, "what about we too?" In Lofa County, this same concern was voiced by an informant there who said that the first major problem of reintegration in that area is that the UNHCR's implementing partners tend to attend only to ex-combatants specifically and not to the general war affected population. Interestingly, this person also linked the effect of this phenomenon with the need for education for the youth as there were an increasingly large number of them "on the streets."

Other reintegration variables that arise from the governance process relate to the problem of making reintegration sustainable or at least progressive even with the systematic exit of foreign relief organisations and other international NGOs. The main challenges to the sustainability of reintegration were identified as logistical, that is, the bad roads, difficulty in transportation between communities and counties and around the country, lack of feeder roads and the like. It is in light of the peculiar severity of this problem in Lofa that one NGO staff in Lofa County expressed the fear that Lofa might be left behind in the economic recovery of Liberia.

Due to the many challenges being faced by the nascent government, one key informant was convinced that achieving the sustainability of reintegration when NGOs begin to pull out of the country would be a major problem and challenge for the government of Liberia in the following year (2007), a challenge that needed to be urgently addressed. However, we were

informed by the District Development Committee in Lofa that "the main objective of the DDC is that after the NGOs leave, the DDC will remain to carry out projects."

4.7.3. Interagency cooperation and coordination. A related governance challenge has to do with interagency cooperation and coordination – how the various agencies work together and with the government to make reintegration transit to longer term development. In the words of the UNHCR reintegration officer in Voinjama,

> UNHCR cannot take care of emergency through development; other UN agencies take care of the [longer term projects]. To ensure a seamless transition to development from the emergency and transition phase, interagency coordination is important.

In this vein, the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE), the organisation created by government for the specific purpose of ensuring longer term development exemplifies how the above is a critical aspect of reintegration. LACE is structured to have all the relevant government ministries represented on its board, as well as work with specific ministries, and organisations such as the European Commission and USAID on specific projects. However, this is not just about constructing infrastructure, but about ensuring sustainability of the projects. According to the program manager in an interview with this researcher:

> LACE is an autonomous organisation though it is an agency created by government….Government is represented on the Board through the Ministries of Planning, Gender, Internal affairs, and so on….We also liaise with the relevant ministry [on specific projects]. For example, when building a school, we liaise with the Ministry of Education. You have to liaise with the Ministry of Education to be sure that after LACE leaves, there will be teachers, and staff to keep the school functional.

The Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment, LACE, is also engaged in governance practices that are beneficial to the process of reintegration. Amongst other things, the organization has a monitoring and evaluation officer who ensures that projects are going on as planned and documents challenges to the timely completion of these projects for the benefit of the returnee and general population. Thus the organization credits itself with building social capital, social cohesion, and actual physical infrastructure in the areas where it works.

In the same vein, the LRRRC believes reintegration has been successful because various international agencies are present and lending "massive support" in the areas of water, sanitation, schools, and so on. The UNHCR also claims that although the nature of its reintegration is short term under the 4Rs strategy, UNHCR provides some basis for the other agencies to carry out long term development projects.

4.7.4. Community involvement in reintegration. With respect to involving communities, most of the agencies and individuals interviewed for this study were able to describe ways in which they involve the people in the communities including returnees in their work in order to empower these populations. Most agencies in all parts of the country visited – including the ADRA, IRC, LRRRC, and UNHCR – say they involve the women groups, youth groups, Parent-Teacher Associations, the DDCs, other CBOs, and other individual members of the community in their work, and also specifically design community empowerment projects, CEPs (UNHCR with implementing partners).

There are two particularly noteworthy instances of structured community participation in the governance of reintegration and development. The DDCs are designed to have members who are representatives from the clans represented in the district, as well as representatives of women, youth, elders, chiefs and the government, including the District Commissioner as an ex-officio member. Under the LACE program, the community is involved through the Community facilitators, CFs (local NGOs that sensitize and identify the community's most pressing needs), and the Project Management Committees, PMCs. The PMCs are nominated by the community facilitators to oversee the projects decided on at the community level. They usually comprise ten persons, including five males and five females, who receive training in procurement, management, finance, monitoring and evaluation. The process is purportedly entirely community driven.

It may also be noteworthy that the process by which the TRC was constituted also attempted to be participatory. According to the Chairperson (and other printed documents), civil society was widely consulted at the earliest stages of the selection in order to lend greater legitimacy to the Commission among various segments of society. Consequently, a panel was set up consisting of ECOWAS, UN, civil society, religious and other representatives. This panel came up with 190 nominations which were published in the papers for the people to see and make their input, after which 15 persons were then chosen and 9 commissioners finally selected to serve. The persons who emerged at the end of the process also represent a

diversity of profession – three clerics (Christian, Muslim, Traditional), one lawyer, housewife, journalist, accountant, and so on. The TRC is also mandated under the founding Act to incorporate traditional justice systems in the work of reconciliation and reintegration.

Unfortunately, it seems returnees are not specifically targeted as a significant population to be represented in any of the above initiatives. We were told by one agency staff in Saclepea that there is no specific mode of involving returnees in reintegration and reconstruction activities, although priority is usually given in program implementation and distribution of services to the districts of high return. In Voinjama, however, we were told by one UNHCR staff that the involvement of the returnees depends on the capacity of the community to which they return, but more specifically, returnees who were trained or educated while in exile, or who had participated in camp administration bring such training to bear once they return. However, the interviewee did admit expressly that there is no formal channel to utilize the skills and experience of the returnees in rehabilitating their communities.

4.7.5 Governance challenges affecting agency performance. As part of the information gotten from the in-depth interviews, the various agencies represented in this research work enumerated some of the challenges that affect their performance and the achievement of their objectives. One international NGO, ADRA, when asked about the programs that are less likely to be funded, admitted that funding is usually provided for "life-saving projects" which are usually in the emergency phase of a crisis, and long term project proposals are less likely to be funded as "donors are not really developmental."

According to another international NGO we interviewed, one fundamental difficulty for agencies involved in the protection of women and children is that in spite of the high incidence of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse witnessed by the NGOs in the field, many actors still deny the existence of sexual exploitation and abuse. These claim that if sex is consensual, irrespective of the differences in power relations or age between the two persons, then such sex is not really exploitation or abuse. This seriously hampers the efficacy of awareness and prevention measures. Similarly, another NGO worker told us that, besides the legal system that poses challenges to protection from GBV, "tradition" is the next biggest challenge.

With reference to the legal challenges faced by various agencies, they mention some of the problems already identified earlier such as the lack of legal and security personnel in the return areas, lack of qualified staff in the legal system, lack of court houses, means of

transportation for gathering evidence and apprehending perpetrators of crimes, poor salaries, intimidation of healthcare workers by police, lackadaisical attitude of the victims to pursuing legal redress, ignorance of the magistrates about the new rape law, and so on. In addition, one UNMIL staff, a lawyer, told us that one reason why the rape law specifically faces opposition in legal circles is that the way in which information about it was initially disseminated by a zealous feminist organization such that it seriously antagonized and alienated the people who were meant to enforce the law. In this vein, one LRRRC officer expressed frustration that though they monitor the outcome of cases referred to the law enforcement agencies, they (the LRRRC) do not have enforcement power over the law enforcement agencies and can only "monitor."

Unfortunately, one NGO staff tells us in an interview, the legal sector is one of the areas most difficult to fund as NGOs feel that the legal sector is the government's responsibility, and so do nothing to improve the system. Coincidentally, the situation might be affecting the work of the government itself, as we were very reliably informed by an insider at the TRC that even the Commissioners of the bureau do not have security persons allocated to them exclusively and they have to be their own security.

In terms of working with others including the returnee women themselves, one agency admits that one limitation they have is reaching women who are not organized in groups. They do not have the resources to reach the women who do not have organizational identity or group representation and aim instead to provide quality to the people they do reach and not bother about quantity.

Interagency coordination also poses a problem for some agencies. According to one UNHCR officer:

> So many agencies are now here which have different mandates, different donors, different implementation strategies, organizational structures and different capacities. Agencies like GTZ, IRC have big capacity, others don't. We also have community based organizations that are good implementation partners but need capacity enhancement in terms of logistics, transport, accounting, financing and so on….

Similarly, community mobilization, an important aspect of post conflict work, is described as difficult. Some agencies started by giving out money for community involvement, while others expected voluntary cooperation of the community. Thus, "the culture of getting money has really created a culture of dependency so that some communities will not do anything

without huge financial mobilization." As if in confirmation, in a later interview with one of the District Development Committees (DDCs), the greatest challenge they mentioned was the lack of funding by the external agencies for them to carry out their functions. They obviously expected a large financial investment in the Committee by the international agencies, and were disappointed when this was not forthcoming.

Finally in this respect, the government agency responsible for working with the communities for development, LACE, identified certain challenges including, the obvious lack of infrastructure; the fact that the urgency they feel is not matched by the communities; the phenomenal rise in the cost of projects due to upward inflationary trends that make the projects more expensive than originally budgeted for; lack of skilled manpower as contractors; scarcity of materials such as cement, and so on.

4.8 Perceptions of success of reintegration

In order to answer the above research question, we asked the women about their current (dis-) engagement with the country of asylum, and their own personal assessment of their situation in Liberia viz their experience in the country of asylum.

The returnees who participated in this study were asked: do you still feel any need to retain a place in your former place of residence in the country of asylum? Only one woman admitted that she still kept her place in the country of asylum, while 13 women said they did not have any attachment any more to the country of asylum. 45 women did not respond to this question.

By way of summarizing the interviews, the women were asked two interrelated questions: do you think your situation now is any different from your situation in the country of asylum? And, do you think your situation now is better than it was in the country of asylum? In response to the first question, the overwhelming majority of returnee women participants, 50 women or 84.7%, said there was a definite difference in their conditions compared to what subsisted in the country of asylum. Only two women said there was no difference, while seven women could not decide. In response to the second question, 39 women said their situation in Liberia was qualitatively better than the situation in the country of asylum. However, six women said the difference for them was that the situation in Liberia was not as good as they experienced in the country of asylum.

The women who responded in the affirmative to the first question- whether there was a difference in their experience in Liberia compared to the exilic experience- were asked to explain qualitatively their perceived change of situation. The reasons given were varied and included both positive and negative experiences. On the positive side the reasons included the following: there is freedom of movement in Liberia; they are no longer dependent on UNHCR; they can talk freely; much suffering was experienced in exile; feel more relaxed now; have access to her/their own land and other services; eat and live better than in exile; there is no longer a language barrier; enjoy their various rights now; there is peace; now living with family; no discrimination any longer; feeling of being respected now; now part of the peace building process; and simply, the feeling that 'home is far better than exile'.

On the negative side, reasons for feeling that Liberia is different included the following: some women are still struggling like before; security situation; the UN helped while in exile; Liberia is very hard; no money for food and rent and other basics; voices not being heard; and being self supported now.

The explanations given above dovetail into and overlap with the reasons given for concluding that Liberia is/is not better than the country of asylum. Those who said Liberia was better for them attributed this to various reasons including: freedom of movement; being happy with friends and family; having a job now; no longer hearing gun sounds; suffering being too much in exile; needs being met; feeling of security; being independent and self reliant; having the right to practice own customs and nationality; and simply that Liberia feels better, and there is 'nowhere like home'. For those who said Liberia was not better than the country of asylum, the reasons given included: things are not moving in Liberia; the difficult food conditions; Liberia is very hard; no school fees; and the security situation now.

The issue of the success of reintegration was also posed to the key informants and other persons interviewed for this research. Some gave quantitative assessments of their perception of the success of reintegration efforts, while others gave qualitative statements.

When asked to give an assessment of the reintegration process, one LRRRC officer said:

> I applaud first the return process. This is because, it has overcome so many hurdles such as very bad roads, security apparatus that is not very strong, the return communities not being policed and the destruction of infrastructure in the [return] communities….So I applaud government and all the agencies involved…Also, the [number of] spontaneous returns indicate the success of

the reintegration process. Reintegration is still ongoing, but in terms of the population that have returned, I will give about 50% pass-mark.

Another LRRRC officer opined that: "reintegration has been successful as the people have been trying to do things for themselves; the IDP return is also good with only a residual caseload remaining as 310000 of 325000 have been handled already. Close to 50% of refugees have also returned. The reintegration pass-mark is about 80%."

Yet another LRRRC officer in Saclepea stated that "the success of reintegration is about 60% because this district became the centre for NGOs and all [agencies] especially when Ganta was destroyed in 2003 March." Another agency staff, while pointing out the efforts and shortcomings of the government, concluded that "the government… has met like 50% of the [reintegration] needs." The District Development Committee (DDC) in Voinjama, was asked whether the various efforts going on in that area to address reintegration needs had helped the people to settle in any way. The committee concluded that the shelter materials, seeds for agriculture, farming tools, and so on helped the people to *return* en masse, but could not assess the impact on reintegration.

One NGO staff in Nimba County admits that for their own organisation,

> Reintegration is a big challenge…because there's little to offer these people. If you provide healthcare, then you think of the people who have no more families. The NGOs don't have enough [funds] to keep them in school – especially the needs of girls are so many and costly, so they are exploited again and again in order to access the little things they need….

One former returnee who returned to Liberia from Cote d'Ivoire in 2000 in her own assessment of the post war conditions stated that, "Liberia is a war-torn country now, so we cannot expect too much from the government. Things will get better if we give chance to the government to do whatever she wanted to do…." This person was obviously expressing optimism about the ability of the head of state, Madam Ellen Johnson specifically.

Other commentators also stressed the difficulties of reintegration in their own assessment of the process. One NGO staff said:

> Yes, we do psychosocial counselling, but where you cannot even eat, all those things are not impacting… [the women] are given tarpaulin to cover the house, but they cannot pay for the men who will put the house together….we give skills training in areas of high return, but in those remote areas, even those skills are not very marketable….Rebuilding is difficult and hopes of prospective returnees were very high; they were not psychologically prepared for the challenges of return.

Similarly another agency staff said the "majority of returnees find it difficult to assimilate back into society because what has been promised has not been fully adhered to."

Perhaps what is most symptomatic of the failure of reintegration in some places is the phenomenon of back – flows, return of Liberian 'returnees' to the country of asylum, especially those living in the border areas. According to one of our key informants in Nimba County, "some returnees are even going back to Guinea because their house is till there free, they don't pay rent there…which indicates that something serious is driving them away." Likewise, one of our interviewees in Lofa county admitted that some 'returnees' were going back to the refugee camps having left their children in schools there. And, in Nimba County, we met one community leader, a refugee from Guinea who said he returned with only some of his family, who told us in no uncertain terms:

> We came because of the property business. We never get our property…. If I don't get my property, I'll go back to Guinea; if I get it, I'll stay.

Additionally, one agency staff in that community linked the property issue and reintegration to the larger challenge of peace building by stating that, "until [the Representatives] come to the communities and talk to the people continuously that peace should reign, peace will not reign." Certainly we know reintegration can not take place without peace.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The previous chapter presented all the data collected from fieldwork carried out in Liberia in order to answer the research questions for this study. This chapter discusses the findings of the research in light of the existing literature, and is organized according to the research questions.

5.1 Introduction

Perhaps most enlightening for our discussion of reintegration in this work is Alexandra Kaun's (2008: 5-6) observation about the recency and dichotomous nature of the literature on reintegration. She notes that: "The literature on reconstruction, reintegration and returning refugee/IDP populations is very recent. What does exist can be divided into two branches: that of international organizations seeking to promote these processes, and scholars who are seeking to better understand it. At the intersection of academia and actual practice, reintegration specialists draw from both sides of the professional spectrum." This point has already been argued in our discussion of the literature on repatriation that identifies the two sides of the debate on repatriation as durable solution. We noted observations from scholars such as David Turton (2003) that it seems the two sides (the institutional policy makers and states practitioners on the one hand, and advocates, scholars and activists on the other hand) are talking past each other rather than communicating by a set of shared meanings. Indeed Jeff Crisp, a refugee practitioner with the UNHCR, in an interview with Laura Barnett (2002: p. 20) explicitly states that "there is a difference between advocacy and operations – a necessary contradiction."

Therefore the discussion of the findings of this research will necessarily incorporate both perspectives as relevant for each theme in order to aid a fuller understanding of the themes being discussed.

5.2 Challenges of reintegration

It is pertinent to note first here that the findings of this study indicate that the simplistic classification of the challenges of reintegration into four distinct categories (political, economic, social and legal) by the UNHCR is unsustainable and unrealistic. The challenges described by the various persons interviewed for this research are complex, interwoven and even hydra-headed. For example, the problem of land for returnees is at once an economic,

legal and political issue; also, problems that arise within the category of 'social challenges' actually diverge into the social, physical and psychological aspects of the returnee's experience; and the issues that seem to fit neatly into the legal category eventually breaks down into issues about access to services (the social), community perceptions about the legal system, and so on. Therefore, this section will often go back and forth in discussing these issues as they are linked and try to draw attention to the patterns of relationship as they emerge from the data.

One challenge that affected about half of all the returnee women who participated in this study was that of accessing basic amenities such as food, shelter and clothing with lack of adequate food or scarcity of food being the primary concern of twelve of the returnee women interviewed. In Kaun's study with Angolan returnees, food security was "one of the most pressing concerns expressed by respondents" (Kaun 2008: p. 13). This particular lack is reinforced by, and results in other problems related to accessing means of economic livelihood. These include lack of access to formal/ paid employment opportunities, lack of support for agricultural activities/ need for seeds and agricultural tools, lack of instruments to start their own business, lack of access to trade and markets, lack of capital, lack of access to credit facilities and local (non-) recognition of skills acquired while in exile.

In terms of the economic aspects of reintegration generally it may be observed that women fare worse than their male counterparts in accessing means of livelihood upon return. Sarah Gammage and Jorge Fernandez (2002) identify this gendered nature of economic reintegration in their study of reintegration and the specific economic situation of displaced and female headed households in El Salvador. In their opening summary of the research they carried out, they assert that "female maintained households…independent of whether they formed part of the concentrated or dispersed displaced, were also found to be consistently poorer and more likely to remain poor over time" (Gammage and Fernandez 2002: p. 1).

Interestingly, the study carried out in El Salvador also identified one of the key factors affecting the economic reintegration of returnees also uncovered in this research on Liberian returnees. The study cites "evidence that those members of the dispersed displaced who received services in camps fared comparatively worse than their counterparts who did not spend time in the camps" (Gammage and Fernandez 2002: p. 24). This means that there is something about having resided in a refugee or IDP camp that makes the returnee less able to cope with the challenges of return at the end of the conflict. This has been referred to as an

aid- dependency syndrome that makes the former refugee unable to think up initiatives for economic and psychological survival for him-/ herself.

Another matter concerning livelihoods and economic reintegration of returning populations that has received considerable attention in the literature is the problem of access to land for agricultural activities. This economic challenge is also a legal one as land ownership and access is usually predicated on existing legal frameworks for land acquisition and use. However, the issue merits a discussion in this section because of the importance attached to it by participants when describing their economic situation and particularly because the issue is so dramatically demonstrated in the Nimba area of Liberia as described in the presentation of data. While drawing on returnee experiences in places such as Kosovo, Tajikistan, Guatemala, Bosnia, Palestine, and Sudan, Bradley (n.d.) notes from the literature that researchers and analysts anticipate that conflicts over land between local residents and returnees could easily hinder the peace processes in societies emerging from war. In Burundi, "the complex problem of land remains a major challenge to the reintegration of returnees. Not only do many, if not all returnees have a land dispute related story to tell, but land has become a scarce commodity" (UNOCHA/ IRIN 2008). In fact according to the UN Secretary General's report on Burundi (2005), disputes over land ownership have been at the core of the conflict in that country. Brett M. Ballard (2003: p. 22) in his study on reintegration and land in rural Laos also notes that the reintegration experience of Hmong refugees in Ban Pha Thao has been dogged by the land question, specifically, unequal distribution of limited land resources in terms of both quantity and quality.

It seems therefore that the experience of Liberian returnees in the above mentioned areas is identified and validated by the literature on returnee refugees elsewhere.

The description of social challenges given by the returnee women in this study on Liberia seems to be corroborated by the literature on returnees in other places. Broadly speaking the challenges of return that are related to the social aspects of reintegration have to do with access to social services such as healthcare, water and education, presence of family members' support, sense of community acceptance by the returnee, feeling of physical safety in the return environment, general security problems in the return environment, and feeling of psychological security. It is obvious from the data that the social aspects of reintegration are intimately linked with the psychological or psychosocial and cannot be neatly extricated one from the other. From the human security perspective elaborated by Alexandra Kaun (2008), the institutional factors that contribute to reintegration are influenced by individual

motivational factors, specifically the returnee's relationship to place, relationship with people, and level of confidence in human security. The individual factors enumerated above capture very well the social-psychological challenges of reintegration uncovered in this research.

In accessing the three social services discussed in this work – healthcare, water and education – the participants in the research noted certain constraints, namely poverty and lack of money, inadequate number of trained experts, lack of drugs and needed equipment, long queues, long distances, teenage pregnancy and motherhood, sexual exploitation and abuse, child labour, and related factors. Most of the women (97%) have children living with them with one third of them having more than four children. The issue of lack of support from family was a major problem for the women surveyed, although most were able to confirm a sense of being accepted back by the community. About half of the participants in this study were able to identify specific general security and personal safety challenges in their neighbourhoods. Some of these also enumerated psychosocial challenges such as resentment by stayees, abandonment, and various forms of gender based violence.

The experiences of the Liberians in accessing healthcare and educational services are also shared by the Angolan returnees in the study by Kaun (2008: p. 17) on reintegration in Angola cited here previously. According to UNHCR and the Angolan government, most of the population in one of the municipalities studied did not have access to healthcare. Respondents also mentioned the long distances one must travel to access a health clinic; few health posts; the lack of transportation to clinics; lack of technically qualified personnel and trained doctors and nurses; lack of essential medications to treat things like diarrhoea, malaria and sexually transmitted diseases; and cost of medicines.

With respect to education, although primary school in Angola after the war is free of charge, many participants in Kaun's study also cited the costs associated with attending school, namely school fees, uniforms, materials, transport, paying of bribes (Kaun 2008: p. 18). Similarly, the people in the provinces Kaun studied in Angola also complained of the high costs of water and the long distances to obtain water.

In the El-Salvadoran case studied by Gammage and Fernandez, they discovered that women were consistently disadvantaged in accessing necessary services. Therefore, they suggest that, the argument may be made for programs that explicitly target the former conflictive zones and female maintained households, providing education, vocational training, healthcare,

small credits and capital loans (Gammage and Fernandez 2000: p. 1). Other authors also support this recommendation, noting that "it may be necessary for the reintegration and reconstruction programs operated by national, bilateral and multilateral agencies to begin to focus on the gender differentiated costs of war for both refugees and the dispersed displaced in order to facilitate the final transition from war to peace and from economic exclusion to full participation in El Salvador" (Gammage and Fernandez 2000: p. 9; cf Ibanez 1999; Las Dignas 1999; UN 1998;Weiss Fagen 1995).

The security and safety challenges expressed by the interviewees could be explained in terms of Call's two trade-off laws, so-called by Adelman in his study of the theoretical considerations necessary for the successful implementation of peace agreements and the success of repatriation and reintegration of refugees within those frameworks. According to Adelman (n.d.: p. 6):

> Call has formulated his own two trade-off laws: in order to secure a peace, the military must be demobilized, but the cost of demobilization may be born by *increased* insecurity for the civilian population and a decreased ability to repatriate refugees.

This certainly suggests that for every post war context, there is a trade-off between demobilizing rebel and other militia and re-establishing the security of lives and property for citizens, which in turn affects the reintegration of returnee refugees.

The clearest argument for a psychosocial discussion of the social, physical and psychological needs of returnee refugees is set forth by Tania Ghanem (2003) in her study titled "When forced migrants return 'home': the psychosocial difficulties returnees encounter in the reintegration process." In this school of thought, the psychosocial approach recognizes that an individual's mind and behaviour are subject to the influences of the social world around him/her. Linking this idea with the reintegration of returnees, Ghanem (2003: p. 7-8) has this to say:

> In the context of refugees… it is the interplay between the returnee's personality and the different social settings in which he/she lives that is important, as it will impact one's construction of the notion of 'home', the latter in turn influencing the returnee's reintegration in his/her country of origin.

It is remarkable that indeed many of the challenges returnees face in Liberia have to do with these psychosocial factors emphasized by Ghanem. Most importantly, this research demonstrates that the social support available to returnees from family, friends, spouses, and so on plays a critical role in the person's ability to face the challenges of return and to reintegrate successfully. The returnees who complained the most about their problems and

lack of access to services were those who said they 'don't have anybody' to help them. According to Majodina (1995: p. 202), "the extent to which returning exiles experience difficulties depends not only on the extent of these difficulties but on the social support they receive and the strategies they use to cope".

From a legal and philosophical perspective, physical safety of returnees has been linked with justice, reconciliation and restitution. Cyprian F. Fisiy (1998) who studied refugee return and identity in Rwanda in the post genocide era notes that it was argued at the time that "without justice, it would be impossible to provide security for those citizens returning to their home communes." The Badil Resource Centre (1999) is cited in Bradley (2005) as noting that the UNHCR observes that return threatens not only physical security but also psychological, economic and legal security. Bradley (2005: p. 6) also expounds this intertwining of the physical, legal and psychological aspects of reintegration by observing that "the key conditions of just return therefore include security; the restoration of property and protection of and accountability for human rights."

However, one important psychological dimension of reintegration which we have already identified, and that was also recognized by other commentators deserves another mention within this context. Returnees may be finding it psychologically or emotionally difficult to reintegrate simply because they have not revised the mentality of depending on aid from the international community and host governments in exile. John Rogge and Betsy Lippman (2004: p. 5) observe that:

> In many cases, IDPs, and refugees have lived in camps where they had access to at least minimal levels of healthcare, basic education, food security and potable water. Returning to areas where none of these safety nets exist makes sustainable reintegration a long and difficult task. The problem may be exacerbated by the fact that returnees have become dependent and may have developed wholly unrealistic expectations of support on return.

Another very important aspect of social-psychological reintegration that emerged from the data in this study relates to returnees' relationship to their neighbours and the stayee population in their community. The evidence suggests that most women return to areas populated by persons who either stayed in the country during the duration of the war or who returned at some earlier time than the returnee refugees who participated in this study. Therefore scanty data collected suggests to us that the relationship between the returnee and

her immediate community is not always harmonious, not always even tolerable and not exactly an easy relationship to clarify or classify.

Sometimes, the relationship between the returnee and the stayee or 'returned stayee' is complicated by jealousy or envy due to preferential treatment the returnee receives from the international community and government in terms of assistance packages containing food and non food items. Once again, Kaun (2008: pp. 28-29) expresses this succinctly:

> The priority given to returnees over former IDPs or stayees affects the larger goals of reintegration and reconstruction….Although one could argue that reconstruction assistance such as hospitals and schools benefits the entire population, this support does not compare to a year of food rations, or distribution of seeds, tools and other household goods which are a part of official assistance packages for returnees….

Indeed it may be recalled that the argument has been made by a couple of the participants in this study that the community projects provided by the international community benefit the entire local community and thus compensates them for the preferential treatment returnees get in terms of assistance packages. While it may be equally undesirable to abolish return assistance programs, it is also naïve to expect the stayee population to roll over and keep mum when they are equally facing challenges as members of the war-affected population.

In this same vein, Human Rights Watch (2003: p. 26), in a report on return and resettlement in Angola counsels that "receiving communities should not be left to bear the cost of the reintegration and reconciliation process on their own. They too need special attention especially given their exposure to landmines; lack of public and social services."

It is equally important to highlight here the prevalence of gender based forms of violence that constitute physical safety and psychological challenges to many of the participants of this research. Indeed, while the high incidence of GBV in post conflict Liberia may be alarming, it is by no means out of the ordinary as several authors have documented the increase in GBV cases in conflict and especially post conflict situations (UN 2002; El Jack 2003; El Bushra and Fish 2004; Jolly and Reeves 2005).

In addition to the problem of legal access to land that seems to be nearly universal to the returnee experience, returnees also are particularly likely to lack proper legal documentation for land and property, citizenship, children, education, and other essential aspects of their lives. This has been demonstrated in the study of returnees in Liberia and seems attributable to several factors including, loss during hasty flight or in exile, destruction by fire, water and other elements, appropriation by male members of the household, women's lack of access to

the necessary processes for obtaining these documents due to cultural and social norms, and also women's nonchalance about collecting such documents when they are able to access aid as dependents of a male head of household.

In Angola after the war, Kaun's data indicates that only 3% of the population in the Moxico region had documentation for their land. Further, the lack of access to documents of identification is a problem expressed by former refugees there (Kaun 2008: p. 25). The report of the UN Secretary General on Burundi in November 2005 notes that when returnees return their lands are usually occupied and their houses destroyed, leading to many disputes. More importantly however, that report rightly recognizes that "the situation of women returnees, particularly widows, is further exacerbated by the lack of adequate legislation to address their inheritance and land access rights." If there were adequate legal mechanisms in place, including appropriate legislation, women's disadvantage in accessing land and documents could be significantly reduced.

There is also the psychosocial aspect to these. For reparation and restitution advocates like Bradley (n. d.: p. 22), "housing and property restitution is typically the form of redress most relevant to returnees….Restoring displaced persons' access to their houses and agricultural land is essential to enabling reintegration and rebuilding livelihood." In other words, the legal aspects of reintegration are as essential as the economic and social aspects as reintegration cannot take place without the legal protection of access to and sources of livelihood.

Other legal issues arising from the data have to do with the absence or incapacity of the country's legal system and as such will be discussed along with all other issues concerning governance and government performance in Liberia (below).

The return of refugees is a political issue everywhere, but the implications of return for the returnees' own engagement with and participation in the political process is a somewhat different matter. While it has been observed that in cases such as Western Sahara and Cambodia, the return of displaced persons in advance of national elections or referenda has been seen as a critical factor for achieving peace (Bhatia 2003; Bradley n.d.), whether the returnees actually participate in these political processes is a matter for further investigation. Also, returnees' own perception of their role in the nascent post war order is also worthy of investigation, because while the scholars and practitioners are agreed that "the return of refugees… is often a critical factor in sustaining a peace process and in revitalizing economic security," (UN 2005 in Bradley n.d.) the returnees may see themselves as having no possible

impact on the nature of things. While some refugees have gained political competence and efficacy in exile, many remain disillusioned and feel alienated from the political system in the country of origin – even after the conflict has ended.

Furthermore, the information gathered from fieldwork in Liberia suggests that the dynamics of all the above political aspects of reintegration have relevance for understanding returnee women in Liberia. Most significant is the very low percentage of women interviewed who could make definite comments about political issues beyond the voting and elections exercise, which unfortunately is the one (possibly the only) political aspect of reintegration that the literature seems to focus on the most.

Notwithstanding, the interesting inference we can draw from the data concerning women's participation or non- participation is that the very nature of the reintegration challenges they face severely limits their ability to contribute meaningfully to the political process in the short term. Many of the research participants cited being a new returnee, loss of voter registration cards, reintegration challenges, the [difficult] economic situation, low education and most instructively, lack of interest as reasons for non participation in the concluded general elections in the country, and in the political process as a whole. These issues have already arisen in our discussion of the various problems of reintegration and go to show more closely the holistic nature of the returnee experience.

5.3 Specific socio-personal factors affecting reintegration

Various specific concerns were identified from the literature as being possible factors implicated in the reintegration of women returnees. These included age, length of displacement, education, skills training, family presence, government policy, area of return. However, correlation analysis indicated that most of these factors did not show any association with specific aspects of reintegration such as access to livelihood, social services, physical security, psychological security, access to legal processes, political issues and women's self assessment of their reintegration. This lack of significant statistical correlation between the majority of variables tested is attributable to the research design which basically does not support any thoroughgoing inferential statistical analysis as the sampling procedures were designed to meet the objectives of qualitative research, and therefore was not 'scientific.' Besides, the number of cases surveyed (fifty-nine) is relatively small for testing significance of correlation, and therefore the results of the test that did not show any

correlation between some variables only indicates to us the intensely biased nature of the sample chosen.

However, when in spite of the small number of cases an association between certain variables is significant enough to be detected, then there is reason to investigate more closely. In this study, age was associated inversely with access to legal procedures; skills training had a positive correlation with access to legal procedures; family presence and support with psychological security; government factors with women's political involvement; and area of return with psychological security.

The literature does make reference in fragments to all of the issues tested in this research and their (non-) relationship to reintegration. In their study of El Salvador, Gammage and Fernandez (2000: p. 14) observed that although both men and women defined as dispersed displaced in their study had higher rates of literacy and slightly higher levels of education than the general population, they appeared to be poorer than those who were not displaced. Vasquez (1999) and Cabarres Molina et al (2000), cited in the El Salvador study, further verify this as they also found that while women may have acquired skills and received training during their stay in refugee camps, they are unable to apply these new skills on their return to Guatemala and El Salvador. In those contexts, "this may be because of the generalized lack of economic opportunity and the reassertion of traditional mores and dictates about women's time and task allocation that confine them to reproductive and domestic roles and limit their entry into the labour market" (Gammage and Fernandez 2000: p. 19). This demonstrates how gender factors determine reintegration over and above factors such as education or skills training.

Kaun's (2008: p. 14) study also indicates that in the Angolan situation, returnees' relatively advanced skills did not translate into access to employment opportunities due in part to the lack of access to materials and credit and general lack of infrastructure, and in part to the lack of recognition of documents showing training received abroad. Furthermore the location of family and friends is identified as having a 'large impact' on the ease with which a returnee reintegrates into a specific environment (p. 25), while the area of return is a major source of psychological satisfaction when there is a strong attachment based on relationship with the land or ancestors (p. 5). And length of displacement is seen as affecting the 'return to normalcy' (p. 28) for most, especially those born or raised in exile (cf. Akol 1987; Roggge and Akol 1989; Rogge 1994; Allen and Turton 1996).

However, on the latter factor (length of displacement and reintegration) Gaim Kibreab (2000) alerts us of an exception. Kibreab, who has studied extensively Eritrean refugees in Sudan[55], notes in his study that the sense of national identity, social cohesion, and attachment to the homeland are very strong among Eritrean refugees in Sudan, regardless of length of stay in exile, and even regardless of other variables such as religion and ethnicity (Kibreab 2000: p. 250). Based on this therefore it would seem that length of displacement for these refugees would not affect the psychosocial aspects of reintegration; whether it would have implications for other aspects of reintegration is yet to be determined or made explicit.

Other studies cited by Kibreab seem to support this disconnection between long displacement and Eritrean refugees/ returnees' identifying with their home land (Allen and Turton 1996; Kibreab 1996a). This seemingly deviant case is explained by several factors, particularly the host country's refugee policy, settlement strategy and perpetuation of refugee status, as well as the treatment the refugees received from the local population in exile and the activities of the [Eritrean] National Liberation Fronts.

In a major study commissioned by the UNHCR and carried out by the Fletcher School at Tufts University in 2001 – 2002 on coexistence (may be interpreted as psychosocial reintegration) in Rwanda and Bosnia, observed the role of some of the factors relevant to our study in post war reintegration. The study found that age, gender (sex), social status, time of return, and place of asylum were differences that mattered to the population they studied (The Fletcher School 2002: p. 19). This shows that contrary to the findings of this study on Liberia, age and time of return/length of displacement does have a role to play in the psychosocial aspects of reintegration, at least in this case.

In Umutara and Ruhengeri in Rwanda, the project identified at least two ways in which government policy affects reintegration. The people in the communities said they felt discriminated against by the central authorities and therefore felt distanced from them. Further, the government's suppression of any ethnically explicit language or affiliation seems to have created more tensions in the communities researched (p. 20). While this does not explain why our study did not correlate government policy and psychological aspects of reintegration, it definitely explains why returnee women's perception of the government could have an impact on their political involvement. It is also possible that there was no

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[55] See Kibreab 1987; 1992; 1994; 1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1998; 1999

initial correlation between government policy and psychosocial reintegration in Liberia because we did not ask the interviewees questions about specific government policies.

In terms of the impact of area of return on reintegration, Gammage and Fernandez (2000) discover from regression analysis that the economic fortunes of the rural displaced were little different from the general fortunes of rural households. This means they did not suffer peculiar disadvantages by returning to rural areas, although the study does not make a direct comparison with urban dwelling returnees. However, it seems to support the lack of correlation between area of return and at least economic reintegration in Liberia.

While the above discussion has attempted to link this study with others in terms of the specific socio-personal factors that affect reintegration, there is undoubtedly the need for further research on these specificities, as most of the existing works (such as the ones cited in this section) do not directly study these individual factors but simply encounter them within predetermined research frames.

5.4 Efforts by various actors to facilitate reintegration

With respect to the efforts being made by various parties to ensure the reintegration of returnee refugees generally and returnee women specifically, a wide array of actors were identified as participating in the process of facilitating or helping the reintegration of returnees. These actors, broadly (very broadly) classified included government/state actors, non-governmental or humanitarian agencies, and communities and their leaders.

Adelman (n. d. p. 7) in his study of refugee repatriation within the general milieu of the implementation of peace agreements identified five types of actors concerned with the returning refugees. These include refugee organisations representing or claiming to represent the refugees; humanitarian agencies; international agencies particularly those with primary concern for refugees such as the UNHCR; states, particularly the states in which the refugees have found refuge and the state from which the refugees have fled, and; military security services, peacekeepers, local military and gendarmes, security employed by NGOs and international agencies. All these actors are usually working at the same time to achieve their different objectives. Any study of the post war environment must take cognisance of the activities of these actors that determine to a large extent the way in which reintegration is pursued.

Instructive in the latter regard is the conceptualisation of reintegration given by one of the officers of one of the prominent agencies for the reintegration of returnees in Liberia, the

LRRRC. Reintegration was defined partly as a return to the 'pre-war conditions,' a definition that is rejected by much of the literature. For example, the Fletcher School's (2002: p. 20-21) work on coexistence in Rwanda and Bosnia confirms that for people who remember pre war relations as being strained and falsely harmonious, a frame of coexistence or reintegration as "returning to pre-war relations" will not be attractive or inviting. They are not anxious to pursue "normal" relations with the "other."

However, the most striking fact from the data collected is that very scanty information existed as to the efforts of returnees themselves in accelerating their reintegration; neither the returnees themselves, nor the various community leaders and agency staff interviewed could identify tangible ways in which returnees generally are involved in their own reintegration. There were however the Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs) widely used by UNHCR and highly visible in the areas of Liberia visited during this research. The CEPs were started by UNHCR in 2003, and planned as a community based approach to reintegration that is planned, implemented and managed by returnees themselves, with funding from UNHCR. They were first tested in Sierra Leone, and the process has since then been improved and used in other places including Liberia. The question that arose for this research however, was whether the returnee refugees/refugee organisations that benefited from this initiative were bona fide.

Significant among the efforts of the government is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an initiative that has the potential for addressing varied aspects of returnee reintegration if successful. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are heralded in the literature as helping to establish the conditions for "sustainable, dignified returns by validating the testimony of the displaced and ensuring that the violations they experienced are not erased from the national historical record" (Bradley n. d. p. 24). This discussion is usually carried out within the framework of the literature on post war restitution, a growing corpus of scholarly works that advocate justice, reconciliation, restitution and state accountability as essential ingredients of the 'just return' and reintegration of former refugees. In this view, "reconciliation can only be based on justice which reconstitutes everyone as members of the same political community" (Humphrey 2002: p. 132). Bradley (2005) notes that returnees' right to restitution has been incorporated into peace agreements in Tajikistan, Georgia, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Cambodia, Guatemala and the former Yugoslavia (Al Majdal 2003: p. 37).

Restitution could take the form of property restitution, but authors observe the overriding need for the state of origin to accept "accountability for its role in the violations that created refugees. Whether it comes in the form of trials, truth commissions, apologies or compensation, the state's acceptance of responsibility for past abuses should involve a revived commitment to upholding the terms of the social contract. This should help restore to refugees at least a degree of confidence in their state of origin" (Bradley 2005: p. 7). This validates the Liberian TRC's mandate and although the final outcome of the Commission's work remains to be seen, much is already achieved by the state's willingness to invest in the project. In fact, the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, appeared before the TRC in February 2009, not only to set the record straight and to deny allegations that she supported Taylor's dictatorship, but more importantly, to apologise for sending money to him and meeting with him in support of the initial rebellion to oust Samuel Doe.

The TRC also seems to be appropriately mainstreamed gender – wise both in composition and in process. It is also pertinent to advise that the final reports and reconstruction of the history of Liberia and the war must contain the experiences of women during the period as mothers, wives, breadwinners, combatants, ex-combatants, displaced, refugees, activists, and so on. Without these, there would be a huge gap in the historical record, and a large percentage of the population alienated from peace, reconciliation and sustainable reintegration. Bradley (2005) tells the experience of the Japanese *ianfu*, the 'comfort women' who were sexually enslaved by the Imperial Army during World War II. The Japanese government offered them financial compensation, but the women refused because the compensation was not accompanied by full acknowledgment of Japan's complicity, both in the form of an official apology and the inclusion of their story in Japanese history curricula. This indicates that the TRC's role is critical for reaffirming women's place in the history of Liberia.

The significance of other non- government actors such as the various international NGOs and UN agencies, lies in the fact that, by their very number and proliferation in the post war country, there is a false sense of security and 'normalcy' created for the returning refugees who are lulled into apathy on their own behalf. Unfortunately as at the time of this study, many of these organisations were serving the last phase of their mandates and preparing to pull out of the country to attend to more immediate emergencies elsewhere – a fact that was not known to, or maybe lost on the returnees we interviewed who variously showed that they were mystified that one day the international community would no longer be so interested in

Liberia. The negative consequences of this would be an interesting study for another research(er).

5.5 Returnee women's knowledge of, and participation in reintegration

Our study of the specific participation of returnee women in, and their knowledge of, any of the above efforts indicated that, although most of the women interviewed actively participated in, and received information about the decision to return, very few kept up this level of awareness and participation upon their return. It may be possible to explain this by making reference to the very harsh conditions of living for most of them upon return, but also indicates more probably the loss of *spirit*, or the loss of the drive to make such efforts once they had returned.

While much of the literature is silent on this matter, we find a possible psychosocial explanation in Tania Ghanem's (2003) work on the psychosocial aspects of refugee return and reintegration. She observes that certain factors may psychologically immobilize returnees and make them unable to participate in their own reintegration:

> Because the returnee and the home country he/she is returning to has changed during his/her long period of absence, and because the returnee does not expect these changes, he/she can often experience a heightened version of what is called 'reverse culture shock'…. Many return with the anticipation that the skills they have acquired abroad will give them the opportunity to contribute to the development or reconstruction of their country (Zarzosa 1998: p. 193; Maletta *et al.* 1989: p. 201). Instead, the returnee's enthusiasm is received by the home population with cold indifference or rejection (Ghanem 2003: pp. 43, 45).

One returnee informant makes this striking remark: "I do not even have here what I had abroad: hope…It is like a mirage that disappears when you touch it" (Maletta et al 1989: p. 197). Once hope is lost, then it would be preposterous to expect the individual to be proactive and engaged in the community to which he/she has returned.

5.6 Governance issues

The governance issues deriving from all the aspects of reintegration studied in this work are varied. However, the categories used in the presentation of data are directly derived from the data and express the issues raised by the research participants themselves in the various interviews. For the sake of clarity, the specific governance issues are restated as follows, but will be discussed in no particular order: the management of return and reintegration, non-/

performance of government, interagency cooperation and coordination, community involvement in reintegration and the challenges facing the agencies themselves.

In general terms, it is useful to note Adelman's (1998: pp. 3, 4) iteration that return home is but the end of the beginning of the process of refugee reintegration. It is also helpful to note that the type of political, legal and economic regime planned to be in place is crucial to the ability to facilitate the repatriation and reintegration of returning refugees.

One of the issues concerning the management of the return process is the allegation by several returnee informants that their return to Liberia was induced by inhospitable conditions in the country of asylum, as well as intolerant policies by the refugee agencies that placed pressure on the refugees to return, whether they would have ordinarily wished it or not. Some also cited inaccurate information given them while in exile to encourage their 'voluntary repatriation.' According to Adelman (1998: p. 8), "if not – so – gentle means of persuasion are adopted to effect a return – cutting down food rations to induce movement… - then the refugees have not really been free to stay or return."

In one of the Forced Migration Online Research Guides, Megan Bradley in a survey of the relevant literature highlights the arguments among scholars concerning the erosion of refugee rights in the new 'era of return,' and the opinion that the voluntary nature of many repatriation movements need to be called into question. A specific case in point is the tripartite agreement that is usually completed by the UNHCR and countries of asylum and origin. In fact, "the few studies that have been completed on tripartite agreements have taken a critical stance, arguing that these agreements are based on the political will of donors, host countries and countries of asylum, rather than on the expressed interests of refugees" (Bradley n.d. p. 9). However, Bradley (ibid: p. 13) identifies an exception to this in the case of Guatemalan refugees in México who participated in decision making about their return by organising themselves into Permanent Commissions, and became influential actors in the national peace process.

To make matters concerning the management of return worse, the majority of returnees in Liberia, the so-called spontaneous returns that constitute an estimated 70-80% of all refuge returns, do not receive any assistance from the UNHCR. Human Rights Watch (2003) in its evaluation of return and resettlement in Angola also makes the damning observation that Angolan spontaneous returnees have received almost no assistance. And then when returnees

finally reach their destinations they face serious humanitarian crises and cannot receive assistance or social services due to the lack of access to the processes.

It is established in the literature and in the practice everywhere that development assistance is critical to the reintegration of refugees – "in a context in which assistance is given to the existing population as well as the returning refugees based on need" (Adelman 1998; Kuhlman 1994; Gorman 1994; Gorman 1993a, b, c; Gorman 1991). There is need to take note of the latter part of the above quote though. According to Adelman (1998: p. 3), there is "an established adage that returnees should not be privileged in the aid they receive relative to those who did not flee," a fact also well supported by the literature (already pointed out above in the discussion of challenges to reintegration). Therefore the aid given to returnee refugees may be a two – edged sword in this respect.

Aid may also be a negative factor in returnee reintegration in another way. *Prendergast's Second Law* (Adelman 1998: p. 6) states that third party support tends to undermine and even destroy the requisite local institutions that must be reinforced to facilitate reconciliation and, in particular, allow the refugees to participate in their own rehabilitation. In other words, the vast array of international agencies involved in the post war environment in Liberia actually serves to discourage local initiative and returnees from participating in their own reintegration and rehabilitation. This point has also been discussed above when we observed the presence of a great number of actors in the Liberian post war landscape.

Another governance issue that arises from the presence of so many aid agencies is the problem or challenge of interagency coordination and cooperation. These agencies usually have differing mandates, different donor/parent organisations, different target populations and different objectives. It is indeed a hard task to achieve some sort of rhyme or reason to their activities or bring about harmony of outputs. The most obvious gap created by this lack of coordination is the failure to effectively link reintegration and relief activities with longer term development efforts. The lack of communication between these actors could lead to inefficient distribution of scarce resources and the paralysis of national institutions supposed to uphold the rights of refugees in the return and reintegration phases of repatriation (Bradley n.d. pp 11 -12). This link between the activities of international agencies and the effectiveness of government efforts is also interesting to note for further investigation.

In their study of post war El Salvador, Gammage and Fernandez (2002) also found that the majority of funds from international agencies focused on repatriation and relocation services,

shelter and emergency relief and meeting the short term basic needs of the concentrated displaced. Actual development assistance was limited, and of the 33 agencies listed, only 13 of them were said to explicitly refer to development projects that are essentially productive in nature. Their study further emphasized the relationship that should exist between (external) relief efforts and (national) development programs by concluding thus: "Emergency relief and reintegration expenditures are seldom sufficient to compensate for the costs of war if they operate independently of national programs that rebuild infrastructure, invest in human capital and stimulate economic activity in those areas most affected by war" (p. 31). Stein (1997) also identifies this critical link between development actors and national development as well as the failure to achieve coordination.

There are also some governance issues embedded in the management of the reintegration process itself. Returnee women and other key informants complained of long distances to collect food rations or other assistance, of receiving roofing sheets without having any means of putting up a shelter, of receiving skills training without markets for them, and of lack of access to skills training, lack of psychosocial support and other difficulties. This specific category of challenges indicate a serious disconnect between the planning of reintegration and the realities for returnees especially women who now bear the additional burden of being exposed to gender based forms of vulnerability such as sexual abuse and exploitation in order to make the connection between service and need.

As in every post conflict context, the government of Liberia (GoL) seems to be struggling with the challenge of providing an enabling environment for the reintegration of her returnee refugees. The most visible problem is the severe lack of infrastructure, closely followed in significance by the incapacity of the security and legal systems. These fundamental problems place returnee women at risk for all kinds of hazards.

To further exacerbate the incapacities of the political and legal systems, it seems the government is absent from the purview of the ordinary citizens. Indeed one of the major irritations of some of the inhabitants of Nimba County is that, in spite of the contentious land issues that have repeatedly claimed lives in that part of the country, the government appointed representatives and elected officials refuse to come down from Monrovia to the villages, or they only get to the big towns like Ganta and neglect other towns outside the towns. Similarly, Kaun (2008: p. 33) says of the Angolan situation that government officials tend to appear only at either the inaugurations of bridges and schools built by NGOs, or during political campaign visits. This behaviour seems to convey a devil-may-care attitude of

insensitivity to the plight of the ordinary citizens. Returnees feel this more keenly as they are the main inhabitants of the interior border areas that experience government presence the least.

The experience from other places indicates that the government can actually be part of the problem-creating factors in the return environment, as for instance when it is the government that reallocates or encourages people to seize land that belong originally to people who became refugees, such that when they choose to return they are locked in interminable land conflicts. This was the experience of Burundian returnee refugees, especially in two of the southern provinces, Buriri and Makemba, where the government encouraged people from other regions to occupy the land (UNOCHA/ IRIN 2008). In his study on reintegration and land in rural Laos, Ballard (2003) also emphasizes the role that governance plays in the process of unequal distribution of land after conflict.

This situation as it applies to the Liberian situation, especially the Nimba case that came to the attention of this researcher during fieldwork, shows that the successive wartime administrations, starting with the Doe regime, played on ethnic differences between the two parties to the land dispute – the Mano and the Gio on the one hand and the Mandingo on the other- using land and landed property in the region as rewards for loyalty. This situation, as in the Burundian case, affected those who fled into exile more severely, threatening their reintegration upon return. An early study by Manfred Horr (1992) of the University of the Saar, drawing lessons from West Germany's experience for African refugee situations, succinctly portrays this problem:

> In many rural areas, ownership and use of farmland are regulated outside the public legislature by local authorities for example by heads of clans on the base of traditional laws, or by military commanders to assure or reward the loyalty of followers. The possibilities of public institutions to intervene in this system to open up access to land for repatriates, for example, via a reallocation of land resources or a land reform, are limited. This situation is additionally aggravated in cases where farmland of refugees has been assigned in the meantime to new owners such as local farmers, party members or military leaders, by the former government (p. 39).

This probably explains the difficulties being faced by the current government in Liberia in this regard.

Both the government and other actors seek to find ways to engage the communities in the reintegration process by including them in bottom-up, participatory forms of governance that bequeath some power to the people. The UNHCR's CEPs were originally designed to give

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communities the opportunity to select projects in accordance with their own priorities, on the understanding that they would contribute to project implementation by providing resources such as unskilled labour and local raw materials (Sperl and de Vrise 2005). John Rogge and Betsy Lippman (2004: p. 5) opine that "facilitating inclusive, representative participation by the community in defining and prioritizing its needs and implementing and evaluating projects based on these needs can affect both the sustainability of the interventions, but just as importantly, social cohesion…."

The above was demonstrated in the Fletcher School's evaluation of UNHCR's coexistence project in two countries. They found that local authorities were taken into account in different ways: some were included, some deliberately excluded and others simply ignored. However, where these local authorities were included constructively, they became important allies in promoting coexistence/reintegration; where they were ignored, they became important factors for undermining success of the project.

Several agencies were able to identify the challenges that affect their optimal performance. The fact that they were able to self – evaluate in this way implies that they accept partial responsibility for some of the shortcomings evident in the governance of return and reintegration. Some of the challenges they identified are of a practical nature: the lack of infrastructure and skilled manpower in key sectors; scarcity of donor funding for longer term projects; and upward inflationary trends that adversely affect budgets and the cost of project implementation for local agencies. Other related difficulties include the issue of community mobilisation, strategies for reaching women who are not organised as part of groups, interagency coordination, and the fact that the agency's sense of urgency is not always matched by the community. The other challenges identified by the agencies spring from the bases of societal gender norms: denial of the existence of the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), opposition to the implementation of the rape law within legal circles, and traditional practices and ways of thinking about women's roles and responsibilities.

5.7 Success/Sustainability of reintegration

The issue of the success and/or sustainability of reintegration was approached from two different angles in this work. First the returnee women themselves were asked to evaluate their own subjective and objective experiences of reintegration and make qualitative statements based on these, and secondly, the various government and other agency staff were

asked to make such an evaluation too based on their own work, objective observation in the field and experience in doing reintegration work. Many of the relevant issues raised have already been discussed above in light of the existing literature, for example the psychosocial aspects of reintegration, interagency cooperation, and such issues that affect the very foundations of reintegration.

Rogge and Lippman (2004) posit that the most successful return and reintegration processes have been those in which 'pull' factors have been created in countries of origin through the upgrading of basic services, creation of livelihood opportunities, and most importantly the establishment of law and order. However, when refugees leave their places of asylum because of 'push' factors such as acute discrimination (as was reported by some Liberians who exiled in Cote d' Ivoire) or overt hostility by local authorities or populations (as reported by some Liberian returnees from Guinea, Cote d' Ivoire, and Sierra Leone at a certain time), they then require special assistance and protection both during and after return.

Probably the most worrisome indication of the failure of reintegration in some parts of Liberia is the actual return of Liberians to the country of asylum, sometimes temporarily and sometimes permanently. Others cannot decide whether they want to stay (in Liberia) or go back, and so they cross the border frequently. Allen and Morsink (1994) in a comparative study also document this propensity for returnees to travel back and forth between the home country and the former host country – particularly when both are geographically contiguous. Some of such returnees also attempt to register a second time into the official repatriation programme so as to receive more material benefits – a phenomenon we also heard was rampant in Lofa country when we visited for this research. Kaun (2008) records that many of the returnees in the regions she studied in Angola expressed their frustrations with reintegration by "speaking with their feet" and moving to urban areas to settle – a phenomenon she referred to as post conflict displacement, which is symptomatic of the failure of reintegration.

In any assessment of the success or sustainability of reintegration, the returnee's subjective evaluation of her/his situation, as determined by mostly psychosocial factors will probably be the most important instrument for such an evaluation in a qualitative study like this. Studies by the Scottish Refugee Council, Maletta et al (1989), Kjertum (1998) "illustrate [one] important [point]: one of the chief incentives why refugees return to their country of origin is to recover the sense of 'feeling at home' which they believe can only be achieved in their homeland" (Ghanem 2003: p. 36). Gaim Kibreab (1999) who advocates the territorialized

view of return and reintegration highlights the strong social and economic connections refugees maintain with their regions of origin as the main incentives for return and reintegration.

However, other scholars note that whenever that sense of 'home' is absent, or expected socio-economic dividends are not attained, then reintegration becomes compromised for the individual returnee. Laura Hammond (1994, 2004), who researched on Ethiopian returnees posits that 'home' is more associated with community and circumstance than with a fixed geographical space. Liisa Malkki (1995) who studied Hutu refugees in Tanzania concluded that refugees identify themselves more by ethnic, gender, age affiliations than with a fixed location.

From the shared experiences of the Liberian returnees concerning their return and reintegration, there is more of an ambivalence as to the idea of 'home'. In the final analysis, it is Kaun's (2008) analysis that makes the most sense for the Liberian situation:

> One's relationship with place depends on both socio-economic factors and the basic rights and freedoms of individuals. For example, when a place was associated with livelihood opportunities, returnees expressed nostalgia for life in the refugee camps, where land was better, petty trade went on and educational opportunities existed. However, when issues such as freedom of movement were addressed, they expressed satisfaction with their presence in Angola.

In the end therefore, it is the returnee who makes the final decision about the sustainability of her/his reintegration; other agents may only facilitate the decision by their activities and involvement.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter will conclude the study on gender and reintegration of returnee refugee women in Liberia and will be divided into the following subsections:

- Summary of key findings
- Conclusions and implications
- Recommendations
- Contributions to knowledge
- Areas for further study

6.1 Summary of findings

This research was an exploratory study of gender and other factors affecting the reintegration of returnee refugee women in Liberia. The objectives of the study were to:

- identify the challenges of reintegration for returnee refugee women in Liberia in the aftermath of the war;
- explore how factors such as age, length of displacement, education, skills, family support, government policy and area of return affect the various aspects of their reintegration;
- discover efforts being made by various parties to address the challenges of reintegration;
- ascertain returnee women's knowledge of and participation in the governance of the processes of reintegration;
- highlight governance issues arising from the processes of reintegration; and,
- determine perceptions about the success and sustainability of reintegration in post was Liberia.

Field work was carried out in Liberia to collect primary and secondary data through interviews, focus group discussions, observation and documents review. The analysis of the data thus collected helped to answer the research questions of this study. The main findings from this research are outlined below:

1. Returnee refugee women experienced great hardships when they returned to Liberia. These hardships were particularly in terms of access to livelihood – food, shelter and clothing- and just remaining alive from day to day. About half of the women interviewed (28 women) cited the lack of basic amenities, while 26 women cited financial problems as being the most significant of their problems.

2. Other problems related to economic livelihood included the high cost of living, rent problems, lack of support for agricultural activities, lack of opportunities for formal paid employment, lack of employment due to lack of skills/education/childcare facilities/connections/capital or tools. Although 34 women had been trained in some skill or the other, 12 women had not been able to access skills training. 55 women or 93.2% of the returnee participants in this study were not in any paid employment at the time of the interviews. Consequent upon the above, 39 women explicitly stated that their income was not sufficient to meet they and their family's needs.

3. Most women demonstrated practicality in providing for their families, by finding multiple sources of income. 26 women said they relied on family, friends, neighbors and charity mostly, and an equal number of women (26) said they relied on petty trading and the skills they learnt while in exile.

4. Returnee women's access to healthcare, potable water and education was limited. Only 56% of the returnee participants said relevant healthcare facilities were available and accessible to them; only 25.4% said they had access to sufficient water for their daily needs; and only 35.6% said they and their children had access to education. The overwhelming majority of women do not have access to these basic services. The factors affecting access to these services included lack of finance, distance to the facilities, and gender factors such as teacher's sexual abuse and exploitation, child labour, teenage pregnancy, early motherhood, rape, and so on.

5. In terms of family presence, 97% of the women interviewed had children, dependents or other family members with them. However, 54% of these said the presence of family impacted their reintegration, sometimes positively sometimes negatively. However, 39% of the participants said they did not have a sturdy family support system to help them through the difficulties of reintegration, and cited spousal abandonment, death of the breadwinner, inability to locate family members as reasons for this lack of social support. Up to 74.6% of the respondents said they felt accepted back by the community to which they returned and did not have any problems with their neighbours.

6. Given the social dynamics described above, 66% of the women interviewed said they felt safe in their area of return. 20 other women (34 %) do not feel safe, or do not feel safe all the time.

7. The most common general physical safety problems encountered by the returnees in the areas of return studied were armed robbery, followed by ritual killings, theft, rape, tribal attacks, murder, 'crimes against women and children,' corrupt justice system.

8. The specific threats to women's safety were identified as rape, teenage pregnancy or 'girl motherhood', exploitation, incest, gender based violence, men, traditional practices such as female genital cutting, early sex and early marriage and denial of right to property.

9. Significant psycho- social challenges of reintegration identified from the unstructured interviews with various authorities include: stayees being resentful of those who left; the perpetrators of gender based violence being the very persons and authorities- such as the chiefs, teachers- supposed to protect the people; absence of the police in most returnee areas to check GBV; high prevalence of rape in returnee areas; high prevalence of other forms of GBV such as child molestation, domestic violence, wife beating, spousal abandonment, etc; lack of access to water and sanitation facilities; lack of access to healthcare facilities due to long distances to clinics and health centres; lack of adequate school supplies and teachers, and; problems of access to education.

10. Seventeen women said they have land and property upon their return. However, of the 12 who said they have documents for such property, only 1 has her name on those documents. Significantly, the women defend the system by which men own the property in their own name simply because the men are 'the head of the family.'

11. Although many women indicated they or their family owned property and land before going into exile, only twelve (12) said they had retrieved such land or landed property, while 10 said they were unable to get their land or house back. Those who had been unable to get their property back gave multiple reasons for this including that the house was destroyed during the war, the document for the property got missing, lack of money to pursue the case, somebody else had built on the land, lack of security in the area, the justice system not being favourable to their tribe, and negotiations still ongoing to get the land and houses back.

12. The incapacities of the legal system in the new government and the problem of land claims are identified as the other significant legal problems affecting returnees.

13. In terms of political participation 24 women said they participated in the concluded general elections in the country, while 16 of them confirmed that they felt their vote made a difference to the election's outcome. Twenty other women indicated that they are members of various community, religious and social organizations.

14. When asked to identify the factors they consider as affecting the equitable participation of women in politics, the returnee women mentioned the economy, reintegration challenges and low education as outstanding factors they feel influence women's involvement in politics. Consequently, three of them said educating girls would enhance the participation and involvement of more women in political/public affairs.

15. The Pearson's Correlation coefficient was used to test for a relationship between age, years of displacement education, skills training, family presence, area of return on the one hand and specific reintegration variables such as access to livelihood, access to social services, physical safety, psychological security, access to legal processes, political involvement and success of reintegration on the other hand. It was found that an inverse relationship existed between age and access to legal processes, while there was positive correlation between skills training and access to legal processes, family support and psychological security, government policy and women's political involvement, and returnees' area of return and psychological security. Other factors did not show any statistical correlation with reintegration.

16. Various organizations were involved in various activities aimed at addressing the reintegration of returnees. Such included government agencies such as the LRRRC, Ministry of Gender and Development, Ministry of Youth and Sports, LACE, the TRC; non- government agencies such as the UNHCR, IRC, UNMIL, ADRA, UNDP, Action Fund, YMCA, District Development Committees; and various Community Empowerment Projects run by communities themselves. The services rendered range from the delivery of basic amenities to the construction of community structures, provision of skills training to policy formulation, restitution and reconciliation, and monitoring and evaluation.

17. Most of the returnees who participated in this study (69.5%) took personal responsibility for the decision to return to Liberia, and about half said they repatriated voluntarily. Although 44 women said they received adequate and relevant information before leaving the country of asylum, only 31 said the information they received corresponded with the reality they met in Liberia.

18. About half of all the returnees said they had knowledge of economic programs in their area of return. Only 18 women had knowledge of community healthcare facilities that were available in their area, while only 13 said they knew about water improvement programs. The overwhelming majority (55 women) did not know about the structures of procedures for addressing security problems in their community. Only 4women said they understood the workings of the legal system.

19. The governance issues that arose from all the interviews and group discussions conducted had to do with the non- performance and incapacities of the government, the problems in the management of return and reintegration, interagency cooperation and coordination, the challenges affecting the government and non-government agencies, and the ways in which the communities were being either involved or ignored in the processes of reintegration.

20. With respect to women's assessment of their own reintegration, only one woman admitted that she still kept a place in the country of asylum. The majority, 50 women or 84.7%, said their situation now was vastly different from the situation while in the country of asylum. However, only 39 could say the situation was better overall compared to where they were coming from.

21. Other informants conclude that the reintegration process was successful to the extent that return was possible and successful, and the government and other international agencies were fully involved in the process. The obstacles to the continued progress of the process of reintegration were deemed to be mainly the infrastructure and security situation, the back flows of returnees to their country of asylum, and many unfulfilled promises that have made reintegration incomplete.

6. 2 Conclusions and Implications

This research has explored the gender and governance factors that affect the reintegration of returnee refugee women in Liberia in the post war period in that country, as well as the various dimensions of the reintegration experience for the research participants. It has sought to highlight not only the difficulties of reintegration but to identify personal, local and international initiatives to attenuate the challenges of returning to a conflict affected setting. This study has also endeavoured to highlight women's voice and perceptions about their own reintegration as well as to provide other (objective?) evaluations of the governance of reintegration.

The findings of this study lead us to conclude first and foremost that the reintegration of returnee refugee women is incomplete at best, and requires the investment of more financial and social capital for the process to be considered unequivocally and truly successful. The fact is that returnees' experiences cannot be divorced from the socio- economic situation in the country and therefore the process of reintegration is as slow and long drawn out as the process of economic, political and social recovery in the post war nation is. All other findings of the study depend on this precondition.

It is also evident from this study that the reintegration process is intensely gendered, both in terms of the social environment to which returnees return, and in terms of the benefits and costs that accrue to women and men. Responses about the challenges of access to relevant social services and knowledge about and participation in the governance of these processes indicate that women are disproportionately affected by challenges that are unique to them and affect their access to these aspects of reintegration. In other words, while the entire Liberian population, and more specifically the returnee population face hardships in the post war era, women, by being women face additional hardships that arise from their social and physiological responsibilities as mothers and wives and daughters. While in some cases these roles have remained the same, in other cases, the responsibilities have increased or become more arduous as a result of the conflict.

Therefore, for example, we observe from this study that returnee women cannot get paid employment because they do not have any one to take care of their children while looking for a job, or even if they were to work outside the home. At the same time, it is the women who take in the orphaned and abandoned children of relatives and neighbours and help the society to keep these ones off the streets. Conversely, because the society has, in part, privileged the education of boys over girls, or reserved particular professions for females (nursing, teaching), returnee women find their options for survival and the maintenance of livelihood extremely limited in the post war economy to which they have returned. There is therefore a fundamental inequality of opportunities that needs to be addressed for reintegration to proceed in a satisfactory manner for the women affected. We may thus conclude that the fundamental power relations between women and men in society have negatively affected women's reintegration.

It also seems that for most of the participants in this study, the daily concerns about life and livelihood indicate that the returnee women's needs remain at the most basic, primeval or primordial levels, and that this affects not only their reintegration, but more especially their

ability to engage with the political system. When people have not solved the problem of access to food on a daily basis, it is difficult for them to move beyond that to get involved in community reconstruction efforts, or in the political process. In times past, this has been a fundamental condition for revolutions in society.

It can also be concluded from this study that many returnee women's engagement with the processes of reintegration has been hesitant at best simply because they have become used to being catered for in the refugee camps and communities by the UNHCR and the international community. This may also be because they have not been meaningfully involved in camp administration and so have not been empowered and do not have any notion about how to be meaningfully involved in their own reintegration or in the recovery of their communities.

We also observe in this study on Liberia that the huge presence of the international community has contributed to a false sense of security that has led returnees to continue to live as if they were refugees in camps with the UNHCR as their patron, and without enough motivation to seek solutions by themselves. While returnee and post war assistance is critical to recovery, reintegration and reconstruction in all parts of the world, it must be admitted that the temporary nature of such assistance, usually stopping short of real development programs, is a cause for concern. More especially, many of the returnees interviewed for this study showed surprise that the international agencies would be leaving the country. This indicates that 'real reintegration' may only begin for such persons when return and reintegration assistance stops.

Notwithstanding however, we were able to identify many women who were actively involved in their own reintegration, in their communities and to a lesser extent in the political process.

This research also concludes that the violence experienced by returnee women as in the pre-war, conflict and post war period significantly affects their reintegration. This is because, amongst other reasons, this affects family stability, mental health and the ability to genuinely 'start over.'

Furthermore, this study indicates to us that the many sources of fear for women remain in the post war environment, and in fact, have proliferated in the communities to which the women returned. To make matters worse, the former protections that existed in the pre-war period such as the opportunity for legal redress, are no more available, or are scarce and difficult to pursue.

Finally, we may conclude that there must be a convergence of personal and local will and initiative as well as national policy formulation and implementation for all the insidious aspects of reintegration to be addressed permanently.

6.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations arise from the findings of this study. Many of the recommendations derive from a holistic analysis of the research findings in this study while many others were proposed by the research participants themselves who have a first hand knowledge of the dynamics of the issues under study.

To the Government of Liberia: The government of Liberia is in a most critical position to make a difference in the lives of the war affected population, including returnees. Therefore most of the recommendations address the government's role.

1. There is need for the government to specifically locate and target the education and skills owned by returnees so that these persons can contribute to the development of the country, assist in training other returnees, and thereby boost reintegration.

2. Women's education must be prioritized above all. Both formal education/ literacy programs and the teaching of life skills are essential to the empowerment of women for successful reintegration. Young girls specially are at risk and must be targeted for such programs.

3. The people's representatives in government need to be closer to their constituencies and demonstrate genuine concern for the plight of their home communities. The government should mandate or sponsor such sabbaticals in order to further engender healing and reconciliation and give the people a sense of the presence of the government.

4. When the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is over, it is imperative for the government to issue an official apology to the Liberian people, at least on behalf of the past governments that caused the people's sufferings. This must be followed by sincere efforts to provide restitution to the persons most affected, beginning with the settling of the land issue. Scholars and other experts have mooted the apprehension that the land issue simmering and flaring in some parts of the tiny country may be a cause for renewed conflict if not contained in a timely and decisive manner.

5. In order to address the tremendous incapacities of the legal and security system, the government needs to enter into bilateral agreements with international partners to provide the needed short term technical support in these areas, and to complement the work already being done by the UNMIL.

6. With the help of such bilateral aid, fast track courts may be created to move along the back log of cases in the court system that have weighed down the legal process. These courts may be roaming or mobile systems that work on a predetermined schedule, receive case information ahead of time and recommend appropriate information to the resident legal authorities to act on within a determined time frame.

7. The existing legal practitioners need to be systematically retrained for the realities of post war Liberia. Consequently, seminars and workshops should be organised for them, particularly with the intent of updating their knowledge, and acquainting them with the gender dimensions of their work.

8. To address the problem in the long term, the government needs to make available scholarships to her citizens who are interested in pursuing undergraduate and graduate studies in those areas of need – including but not limited to the fields of law, security studies, education, medicine, social work.

9. The economy must continuously be the focus of the government's untiring efforts. This is particularly important so that the 'gains' achieved by the presence of the international community and NGOs are not reversed when those agencies move on to more interesting contexts. National and local organisations must be empowered to take off where the international agencies like the UNHCR leave off.

10. Vigorous efforts must be made to enlighten the people at the grass-root level about the activities of the government, her challenges and the need to demonstrate patience for developmental efforts and be a part of the process. Returnees especially need to be encouraged to see Liberia as 'home' in spite of the hardships they may encounter, and to contribute their quota by devising ingenious and productive coping strategies.

11. The government, in partnership with the UNHCR must work to study carefully the problem of returnees returning to the country of asylum, and work to stem these back flows.

12. Peace education and education for peace must be incorporated into the educational curriculum, as well as decentralized and disseminated at community levels. This is important so that the country never returns to war again, and does not produce the numbers of refugees that the sub-region witnessed in the last two decades or so.

To the communities the returnees go back to: Particular attention must be paid to the situation of the war affected youth, and security at the local levels.

13. As most young people seem to be growing up without parents/ guardians who prioritize their future and wellbeing over subsistence needs, the community must provide the needed stability for such persons. One interviewee suggested that having some kind of girls [or boys] campus that provides young people with the needed structure, skills, education and protection they need to survive would be a step in the right direction.

14. Besides such a formal structure, engaging young people in sports, drama, and other artistic activities have been valuable in order parts of the world for saving an entire generation and ensuring peace in the future.

15. Community policing must be organised to fill the gap while the national government builds her capacity in this critical area.

16. Communities, including women, men, youth and other groups should initiate programs and projects that address their most pressing needs and can be sponsored by the government or other agencies. The purpose of these would be to turn the current top-bottom administration of reintegration projects on its head, and return power to the communities.

To the international community and its various agencies and representatives:

17. Probably the most important governance challenges that need to be addressed are the problems of interagency coordination and appropriately linking relief and development aid in a meaningful and enduring manner.

18. District Development Committees that are currently existing are an excellent way of achieving this aim and should be empowered with the materials, skills and equipment needed to take over relief efforts for longer term development when the agencies' mandates run out. This process of training must run concurrently with current projects so that these bodies develop the know-how to oversee their community's development.

19. The UNHCR specifically, must revise its current strategies of providing assistance that leave women in particular unassisted or even more vulnerable to abuse. For example, skills training should culminate in the provision of materials to start up business with; food assistance should be planned to span the period form when the returnees return till the first harvest.

20. The UNHCR must also begin to implement some of the various alternatives to involuntary voluntary repatriation that have been proffered in recent years. Alternatively, the organisation may work with the principal states in the international system to once again open up the asylum and resettlement process in first world countries. The Obama (US) administration could take a lead on such processes as is already evident in recent policy initiatives with regards to Liberians in the US, and with regards to Cuba.

To the women returnees:

21. Hope and courage are the beginning of the reintegration enterprise everywhere else in the world. In the long run, 'home' is a choice the individual makes, and the returnee women have the power within them to make the choice to be resourceful in addressing their own problems, to form/join groups and participate in community and other processes that benefit them, and to stay.

6. 4. Contributions to knowledge

In the first place, this research describes the realities of reintegration for returnee women in Liberia in the aftermath of fourteen years of wars. While other studies have studied similar subjects in other places, this study on Liberia is original and new. The research was carried out at a time (three to five years after the Liberian war) when the Liberian landscape was not yet attractive to researchers as infrastructure and security were still very rudimentary. This research was therefore pioneering in that it provides a 'snapshot' of returnee experience at this critical time in the post war history of Liberia; other researches that come after this cannot reproduce the same important 'picture' of Liberia as the context is a fast-evolving one, neither can they go back in time to measure the variables that were covered by this study.

Secondly, whereas there exist today many studies on various aspects of post-war Liberia, none address the entire reintegration façade. In other words, this research makes a unique contribution by investigating *all* the facets of reintegration – economic, social, psychological, political and legal – in one study, and not just one or two discrete variables, as most other studies do. In addition, this comprehensive study brings together in one place the views of a broad range of actors involved in reintegration in Liberia, and not just the experience of one agency or the other, or random interviews by a journalist.

The third contribution this study makes is to tease out the governance aspects of reintegration, a discussion that is usually mixed up and undefined in other studies of

reintegration. The literature is replete with studies of reintegration that do not recognise that reintegration is a governance issue and need be explicitly analysed as such. This study makes an important contribution in this regard by bringing governance into relief, and by linking governance to sustainable reintegration, and to sustainable peace.

Fourthly, this research makes a critical contribution to the sparse literature on women and durable solutions, especially in West Africa, and expands our understanding of how the application of these solutions have a qualitative impact on women's lives in post war societies.

Fifth, this study empirically tested the relationship of specific factors to the various aspects of reintegration. While many of the factors identified are recognised in the literature, authors do not attempt to make an empirical association between them and returnee reintegration. The preliminary findings from this correlational analysis can form the basis for more in-depth, systematic investigation of the association and relationship between these socio-personal factors and specific aspects of returnee reintegration.

Finally, (but by no means the least important) the theoretical framework used for this research is original and may be used by future researchers to aid a holistic understanding of gender and reintegration of refugees.

6.5. Areas for further study

Given the time, cost and academic limits placed on this research, certain issues could not be explored and pursued to their logical conclusion. As well, various matters arose from the study that merit further investigation. Some of these are:

1. The issues studied in this research may be studied in other counties in Liberia not covered by the scope of this research, or in other post war contexts.
2. The relationship between age, length of displacement, skills/education, family support, area of return and specific government polices on the one hand, and the various aspects of reintegration on the other hand would be an interesting research.
3. It would also be interesting to explicitly investigate the link between specific policy design and gender (dis)advantages in Liberia.
4. The role of NGOs in determining the post-war policy agenda and in constructing gender in postwar countries like Liberia.

5. A research such as this may be carried out using other methods such as life histories for a deeper analysis of individual factors affecting reintegration, or a longitudinal study to explore developments in individual reintegration over time.

6. The impact of specific programs on the communities of return in Liberia, or on the livelihood of returnees may also be evaluated by academic research.

7. The role of the TRC process and its final reports in the reintegration of returnees would also be worth investigating.

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APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

GENDER AND RETURNEE REINTEGRATION INTERVIEW A (GRRIV-A) - for Returnee Women

Section One-Bio data

1.1　　Age as at last birthday…………………………………………………………

1.2　　Place of residence: county/ town/ locality …………………………………..

1.3　　Ethnic group…………………………………………………………………...

1.4　　County/locality of origin, if different from current place of residence……………………………………………………………………………

1.5.1　County/locality of residence before exile, if different from both above…………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………

1.5.2　Why the change?...
…………………………………………………………………………………………

1.6　　Marital status: single, married, widowed, separated, divorced, cohabitation, other (specify)…………………………………………………………………

1.7.1　Are you the head of the household?..

1.7.2　If so/not, explain…………………………………………………………………

1.8　　Number of children and/or other dependents……………………………………

1.9　　Highest educational qualification: no formal education, primary school, junior secondary, technical education, senior secondary, post secondary (specify), postgraduate, other (specify)………………………………………………………………………

1.10　Skills training – catering, bread-making, sewing, brick-making, hairdressing, mat-weaving, et.c – please specify…………………………………………………………

Section Two: Exile and Return

2.1　　What activities did you engage in during the war before you became a refugee? Specify nature of activity: combatant, member of pro-government/rebel group, spy/scout for armed group, peace activist, et.c…………………………………………………………..

2.2.1　When did you leave Liberia to become a refugee?...

2.2.2　If more than once during the period 1989-2003 please indicate with dates……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

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* Some of these questions have been adapted from the UNHCR's Gender Checklist for Liberia (December 2003) and UNHCR Somalia's Returnee Monitoring Form. See UNHCR (2004) Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities.

2.3.1   In   what   country(ies)   did   you   reside   during   that   period?
....

2.3.2   If   more   than   one,   place   indicate   with   dates   and   duration   of   stay
each…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

2.4   Why did you leave Liberia? Give specific reason(s), as many as exist or can be
recalled…………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

2.5   When did you return (to Liberia) this last time?..

2.6   Why   did   you   return,   and   why   at   that   time?
....

....

....

....

2.7   Who   made   the   decision   for   you   to   return   when   you
did?..

2.8   With whom did you leave Liberia?...

2.9.1   Did you return with them?..

2.9.2   If not, why not?...

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

2.10   Who facilitated or sponsored your return to Liberia? Self, UNHCR, Family
members/friends,   any   other;   please   indicate,   with   specific   nature   of   assistance
received……………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

2.11.1 Did you return voluntarily?...

2.11.2 If   not,   then   why   did   you
return?..

....

....

2.12   Did you have access to adequate and relevant information on the situation in Liberia
while in the COA?..

2.13   Did the information you received in the COA correspondence to the reality you found
in Liberia after your return?..

2.14   How would you sum up some of your most pleasant/unpleasant experiences during
exile   in   one   or   two   sentences?...

....

....

....

....

....
....
....
(Use additional sheets if needed)
2.15   Do you think being a woman made a difference for you in these experiences?........
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………….

Section Three-Access to Livelihood
3.1   What are some of the challenges/problems you currently encounter as a returnee woman in post war Liberia?...
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………....
3.2   What is your current source of income?...
3.3.1   If you have employment, explain how you found the job………………………….
………………………………………………………………………………………………
3.3.2   What are the difficulties you encountered as a returnee woman in finding a job?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
3.3.3   Is   your   income   sufficient   to   meet   you   and   your   family's   basic needs?...
3.4   If self employed, how did you access the resources to start your own business?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………….
3.5.1   If currently unemployed, give reasons……………………………………….......
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………..
3.5.2   How   do   you   meet   you   and   your   family's needs?..
....
3.5.3   Are there any programs available for you to acquire loans, seeds, et.c. to start up your own   business,   farm,   and   so on?...
3.6.1   Which of your education and skills did you possess before leaving Liberia during the war?...
3.6.2   Which of your education an skills did you acquire while in the country of asylum (COA)?...
3.7   Have you participated in any skills training program since you arrived in Liberia?
………………………………………………………………………………………………
3.7.1   If yes, specify skill learnt………………………………………………………...

3.7.2   If   no,   give
reasons…………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

3.8   Are any of the skills you learnt either in exile or on return relevant to helping the reconstruction process in your community or area of return generally?...

3.9   If so, of what specific use might they be?..
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

3.10   Suggest ways of improving returnee women's access to sources of livelihood…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………

Section Four-Access to Social Services

4.1   Are women's healthcare needs in the areas of reproductive health, family planning, maternity health, specialist obstetric and gynecologic care, mental health and counseling, et.c, available and accessible to you in your area of return? (Specify facilities that are available and accessible)…………………………………………………………….
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

4.2   Are there female healthcare providers?...

4.3   What are some of the factors that limit your access to the existing healthcare facilities?..
....……………...............
....

4.4   Mention any other healthcare facilities that you would like to be provided in your community…………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

4.5   Are you aware of any efforts being made by the people (including you) and the authorities (local, regional, national and NGO) to improve the availability and accessibility of healthcare facilities in your community that address women's healthcare needs?..

4.6   Did you participate in the planning and implementation of any of these programmes?..

4.7.1 Have you benefited from any of these?...

4.7.2 If yes, did you experience any difficulties in accessing such programs?...
....

4.7.3 If   no   in   4.7.1,   why   not?
………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

4.8   What are the main sources of water for your personal, household and sanitation needs?..
....

4.9.1   Do you consider the water you get sufficient to meet your needs? …………………………………………………………………………………………

4.9.2   If not, what do you think can be done to improve your access to potable water? …………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

4.10   Are you aware of any efforts being made by the people (including you) and the authorities (local, regional, national and NGO) to improve the availability of usable water in your community?...

4.11.1 Have these improved significantly your access to water for your daily needs? ……………………………………………………………………………………………

4.11.2 If   so,   how?   If   not,   why   not?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

4.12   Do you and/or your children have access to primary/secondary/technical/tertiary education?..
....

4.13   Do female children have an equal chance as their male counterparts to attend school?..

4.14.   What are some of the obstacles to you/your girl children's access to educational facilities?..
....
....

Section Five: Physical and Psychological Security

5.1   Did you return with any member of your family or do you have any family/friends in the community to which you returned? Specify persons, if any, and your relationship to them………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

5.2   Has this made any difference in your ability to cope with the circumstances of return?...
....
....
....

5.3.1   Do you consider yourself accepted back by most members of the community? …………………………………………………………………………………………

5.3.2   If so/not, why? …………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

5.4   Do you feel safe in your area of return?...

5.5   If no, please explain………………………………………………………………...

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

5.6   What general security problems exist in your area?..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

5.7   Have you or any members of your family been affected by any of these?..

....

5.8   How was the situation dealt with?..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

5.9   Who   is   responsible   for   handling   such situations?...

....

....   5.10

          What are the specific threats to safety a woman in this environment has to deal with (both   at   home   and   in   the community)?...

....

....

....

5.11   Are there any traditional practices existing in this area that might affect a woman's physical,   psychological   and   social   wellbeing?   Mention   these please……………………………………………………………………………………………

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5.12   Do you think women's and men's security concerns are known and being adequately addressed   by   the   relevant authorities?..

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5.13   What security measures are in place in your community to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence?..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

5.14   Do you know any woman who has successfully used any of these procedures? …………………………………………………………………………………………………

5.15 What obstacles might prevent women from using any of these processes?..
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....

5.16 Suggest possible ways of improving the security situation in your locality…………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………

Section Six: Access to Legal Processes

6.1 Are you aware of how the system for justice and legal redress functions?...

6.2 Do you own any lands or houses currently?...
....

6.3.1 Do you have legal documentation for the property?...

6.3.2 If yes, is such documentation in your name, or in the name of another family member? Specify person and relationship to you………………………………………………………………………….…
…………………………………………………………………………………

6.3.3 If no, please explain why…………………………………………………….
………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………

6.4 Did you or your husband or other family own landed property before you went into exile?...

6.5.1 Have you been able to retrieve such property?..
....

6.5.2 If no, give reasons……………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………

6.6 Do you have other needed documentation for you and your family, e.g. birth certificates, identity cards, school certificates, travel documents, property documents and others?...
....
....

6.7.1 Do you feel safe using the existing clan/community/state legal system?..

6.7.2 If yes/not, explain……………………………………………………………...

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

6.8.1 Do you have confidence/faith in the fairness and justice of the existing legal system?..

6.8.2 If so/not, why?..

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

Section Seven: Political Issues

7.1.1 Did you participate in any of the elections held last year?......................................

7.1.2 If   yes,   specify which………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

7.2.1 Do you think your vote made a difference to the outcome of the elections?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

7.2.2 If not, give reasons why not……………………………………………………………...

……………………………………………………………………………………………

7.3 Are you a member of any political party/association, community organization, local NGO,   and   such   other   organizations?   If   yes, specify…………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

7.4 Do you think women in this community/country are adequately represented in public/political life?..

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

7.5 Do you think women have the same opportunities as men to effectively participate in politics, or to achieve political office?..

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……………………………………………………………………………………………

7.6 What do you think are some of the factors affecting the participation of returnee women in politics and public life generally?...

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7.7 What do you think can be done to enhance the participation of women in public affairs?...

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7.8 What is your view about the sincerity, vision, performance and legitimacy of the Sirleaf government?..

……………………………………………………………………………………………

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7.9   Has the current political system enhanced/reduced in any way your human rights? Explain please…………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………

7.10   Do you still feel any need to retain a place in your former place of residence in the COA? If so, why?...
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………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………

Section Eight: General Issues

8.1   In sum, do you think your situation now is any *different* from your situation in the COA? Explain…………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

8.2   Do you think your situation now is *better* than it was in the COA? Explain
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………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
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8.3   State specific ways in which you or other women in your area are contributing to post war reconstruction and peace building……………………………………………...
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………………………………………………………………………………………………
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GENDER AND RETURNEE REINTEGRATION INTERVIEW – B (GRRIV-B) – for staff of government and non government ministries and agencies and community leaders.

1. Describe your position and/or the work of your agency in this community/county/country, both generally, and in relation to returnee refugees.
2. What specific governance/power structures can be identified within this community/locality/county/country?
3. What specific threats or risks do returnee women and girls face in the current environment?
4. Are returnee women involved in decision making at the highest levels on the basis of equity in access and opportunity?
5. Is available data and analysis on reintegration programs and peace building activities disaggregated by sex/ if not, why not?
6. Are there sufficient funds for reintegration programs? Are these allocated on the basis of general and gender-specific needs? Explain please.
7. In what ways have the support of local, regional and national women's organizations/ other partners been enlisted to facilitate reintegration of returnees? Describe nature of collaborations.
8. What security measures are in place to protect returnee women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence?
9. Do the existing law enforcement, legal and constitutional systems pay attention to gender-specific perspectives?
10. What measures are currently being taken to address the above problems?
11. In your opinion, are these programmes inclusive, participatory and responsive enough to meet the needs of the returnee refugee women and men?
12. To what extent do you think the reintegration of returnees is being successfully accomplished?
13. In what possible ways could the above impact the progressive consolidation of peace in the aftermath of prolonged conflict?
14. Other relevant questions depending on the agency/official/conversation.

GENDER AND RETURNEE REINTEGRATION GROUP DISCUSSION (GRRGD)
Focus Group Discussion Guide for returnees

1. Describe the ways in which the war and displacement has affected your persons, roles, identities and capacities as women/men.
2. Are there any differences between your situation in the COA and your situation now? Explain.
3. Describe some of the challenges of adapting to a post war society.
4. Describe the nature of your relationship with the stayees in your community.
5. Enumerate some of the reconstruction efforts going on in your area.
6. Which of these are initiated and implemented by women/men?
7. Which of these have been most/least effective in helping you reintegrate more speedily and more effectively? Explain.
8. Do you think planning programs/projects that benefit returnees specifically is justified?
9. What are the continuing challenges to your securing the conditions needed to enable you maintain life, livelihood and dignity?
10. Do you think the reconstruction and peace-building process is progressing at a reasonable pace? Explain.
11. What is your view about the sincerity, vision, performance and legitimacy of the Sirleaf government?
12. If you could speak to the president right now, what would you tell her?
13. Suggest possible measures/policies/programs that you deem necessary for improving the quality of life in your area, and for consolidating the peace in the country generally.

OBSERVATION GUIDE

In each community visited, check:
1. the availability, accessibility, quality, and congestion of educational, healthcare, water, sanitation facilities;
2. the visibility of governmental presence;
3. the prevalent atmosphere of security/insecurity;
4. the type of dwelling in which returnee respondents live; and
5. the visible evidence of individual respondents' problems or successes of reintegration e.g. physical appearance, children's appearance, location, and quality of dwelling, et.c.