

**FMO Country Guide: Liberia**  
**Author: Shelly Dick**

**Summary**

**1 Overview**

- 1.1 Historical background
- 1.2 Politics
  - 1.2.1 Ethnicity
  - 1.2.2 United States/Liberia relations
- 1.3 Culture
- 1.4 Geography, society, and economy

**2 Causes and consequences**

- 2.1 The business of war
- 2.2 Regional involvement
- 2.3 Continuing conflict
- 2.4 Conflict-induced displacement
  - 2.4.1 Refugees
  - 2.4.2 IDPs
  - 2.4.3 Sierra Leonean refugees
- 2.5 Vulnerable populations
  - 2.5.1 Child soldiers
  - 2.5.2 Women
- 2.6 Legal framework
- 2.7 Human rights

**3 Needs and responses**

- 3.1 Refugees in exile
  - 3.1.1 Guinea
  - 3.1.2 Côte d'Ivoire
  - 3.1.3 Ghana
  - 3.1.4 United States and Canada
- 3.2 Civil society
- 3.3 Government assistance to IDPs
- 3.4 Peace process
- 3.5 International assistance

**4 Other resources**

- 4.1 Liberian news sources
- 4.2 Links to other Liberia Websites
- 4.3 Liberian organisations
- 4.4 Other documents on the Web
- 4.5 Non-electronic resources and bibliography

**Formal Name:** Republic of Liberia

**Capital:** Monrovia

**Estimated Population:** 3,288,198 (July 2002 estimate)

**Map** (January 2003 UNHCR)

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ/opendoc.pdf?tbl=PUBL&id=4487e9070&page=publ>

**Summary**

Since December 1989, Liberia has been a source of ongoing hostility and regional instability that has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Beginning as a war to

oust President Samuel K. Doe, conflict in Liberia descended into a protracted war in which multiple factions vied for the presidency and for control of Liberia's lucrative iron, timber, diamond, and rubber resources. The devastating conclusion of seven years of violence and bloodshed was that an estimated 200,000 people were killed out of a pre-war population of 2.8 million, and more than half the country was forced to flee their homes. Of those displaced, approximately 1.2 million persons were displaced within Liberia and 700,000 refugees fled out of Liberia. The UNHCR estimated that 160,000 Liberian refugees were in Côte d'Ivoire, 235,000 in Guinea, 14,000 in Sierra Leone, and 17,000 in Ghana at the war's end in late 1996.

More than 80 per cent of all uprooted Liberians returned home when the civil war ended and former warlord Charles Taylor was democratically elected into office in 1997. However, Taylor's presidency has not led to a return of peace and security in Liberia. Since 1999, conflict, primarily in northern Liberia, has continued between Taylor's government and rebel forces of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), leading to further displacement. Additionally, Taylor has been implicated in the spread of conflict to Sierra Leone, causing refugee flows into Liberia; and Guinea has accused Liberian rebels of operating within her borders. An estimated 80,000 Liberians were newly internally displaced at the end of 2001 ([USCR](#)). As of February 2003, another 6,000 Liberians had fled to Sierra Leone, 30,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) were seeking refuge near Monrovia, and about 88,000 Liberian returnees and Ivorian refugees had entered Liberia to escape conflict in Côte d'Ivoire ([UNHCR](#)). The situation remains volatile, and increased displacement is likely if the regional instability continues.

#### **Websites:**

US Committee for Refugees, 2002 Country Report - <http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/africa/liberia.htm>

UNHCR 2003, 'Thousands Flee Liberia's Conflict' - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+dwwBme8TG1KwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwFqnN0bItFqnDni5AFqnN0bIcFqrcoxnGowDzmxwwwwww/opensdoc.htm>

## **1 Overview**

### **1.1 Historical background**

As early as 1461, Portuguese explorers were the first Europeans known to establish contact with the inhabitants of the Grain Coast, so named for the area's abundant supply of melegueta pepper grains. In 1633, the British established trading posts in this area, which was to become Liberia. Although the Dutch followed the British and destroyed their trading posts, history does not record any other reports of European settlements in the area until the 1800s.

In 1821, the American Colonization Society (ACS), established to find solutions to the problem of slavery in the United States, sent Captain Stockton to the Grain Coast to negotiate with an indigenous leader named King Peter for lands to establish a quasi-colony for freed American slaves. Soon after, a settlement was established in what is now Monrovia (named after US President James Monroe) and freed slaves from the Americas began arriving by the thousands. These settlers, known as Americo-Liberians (from the United States) and the Congo people (from the Caribbean), banded together to form the Republic of Liberia (meaning 'Land of the Free'), which gained its independence from the ACS on 26 July 1847.

For the next 133 years, the Americo-Liberians, who made up less than 1 per cent of the population, governed Liberia through the country's only political party, the True Whig Party. Indigenous Liberians were excluded from political and economic opportunities reserved for the elitist settlers. However, the Americas and Congos intermarried with the native population and took on local wards, allowing for a degree of integration between the settlers and the 'country people' as they were called.

Though the Americo-Liberian government operated on a flawed and highly discriminatory basis, Liberia did enjoy peace and stability under their regime until 1989 when President Tolbert's decision to hike the price of rice, Liberians' staple food, caused urban Liberians to riot in the streets. This civil unrest paved the way for indigenous Liberian Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, from the Krahn ethnic group, to seize power in a coup d'etat on 12 April 1980.

Under Doe's regime, the economic and political situation deteriorated significantly, propelling the country toward the conflict that raged throughout the 1990s and continues to fester today. Doe's blatant mismanagement of state funds, his increasingly authoritarian rule, and his brutal treatment of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups linked to his would-be assassin Thomas Quiwonkpa, led to his increasing lack of popularity and set the stage for Libya-backed rebel leader Charles Taylor to mobilise dissenters against the Doe regime.

On 24 December 1989, Taylor launched an attack on Liberia's northern Nimba County, and his forces quickly moved toward the capital marking the beginning of Liberia's civil war. West African states sent ECOMOG peacekeeping forces to quell the violence, but they maintained a presence only in Monrovia while Taylor's rebel forces controlled the rest of the country, known as Greater Liberia. Early on, Doe was brutally killed by another rebel leader named Prince Johnson, but this did not resolve the conflict. Instead, law and order broke down with numerous factions forming, each with the goal of winning the presidency and profiting from the country's lucrative natural resources. Government soldiers and rebel fighters alike paid themselves by looting whatever they could find, and violence was rampant, causing thousands to flee for safety.

In August 1995, the Abuja peace process was launched in an effort to resolve the conflict, but renewed fighting in April 1996 temporarily paralysed the process. After more than ten failed cease-fire agreements, in August 1996 the Abuja Peace Accords were accepted by all relevant parties involved, making it possible to hold democratic elections in Liberia in July 1997. Charles Taylor won the election, but many believe that this was possible largely because Liberians feared ongoing war if he were to lose the election.

Since becoming president, Taylor has encountered little respect from the international community, which views him as a pariah in West Africa. Taylor has also faced opposition from LURD, who have engaged in rebel attacks in northern Liberia since 1999. Conflict moved alarmingly closer to the capital in 2002 and 2003. In this environment prospects for post-war reconstruction are limited, and peace and security in Liberia remains tenuous at best.

**Websites:**

US State Department, Background Notes 2001 - <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>

CIA, World Fact Book 2002 - <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/li.html>

Chronology of Liberia Historical Events - [http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/li\\_indx.html](http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/li_indx.html)

Country Report - <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107718.html>

## **1.2 Politics**

Liberia's constitution and governmental structure is based on the US model. However, checks and balances on the executive branch are minimal. Liberia has a bicameral legislature consisting of sixty-four representatives and twenty-six senators, but until 1984, political parties other than the True Whig Party were banned in Liberia. The change came as a result of international pressure put on Doe to allow Liberia to return to civilian rule, leading him to arrange for multiparty elections in October 1985. His National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) was declared winner in what many considered to be a fraudulent and rigged election. Currently, a number of political parties exist in Liberia, but Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) dominates the legislature.

Under the Americo-Liberians, the True Whig Party governed Liberia with a system of indirect rule, co-opting the support of local leaders to control the indigenous population in exchange for financial reward and a measure of political influence. While that system is no longer in place, the president still maintains significant control over local politics by appointing superintendents to govern Liberia's fifteen counties. The basic unit of local government is the town chief. There are clan chiefs, paramount chiefs, and district commissioners. Mayors are elected in principal cities in Liberia.

Liberia's judicial system, comprised of traditional courts and lay courts in the counties, is functional but extensively manipulated by the executive branch. There are a Supreme Court, criminal courts, and appeals and magistrate courts in the counties, but reports of unauthorised arrests and illegal detentions abound.

### **1.2.1 Ethnicity**

Although historically not a volatile issue, since Doe's regime ethnicity has become highly politicised in Liberia. In 1985 when Army Commanding General Thomas Quiwonkpa, backed by Gio and Mano supporters, staged a coup attempt, Doe responded by executing Quiwonkpa in Monrovia and sending the armed forces of Liberia, heavily dominated by his own Krahn ethnic group, to attack Gio and Mano villages in northern Liberia. Taylor built on the growing resentment between these groups, rallying his forces among the Gio and Mano to seek retribution against the Krahn and the Mandingo, another ethnic group originating from Guinea that had links to Doe.

While ethnic conflict was certainly a factor in the war, factions did not recruit only along ethnic lines. To do so would have placed them at a disadvantage relative to other less discriminating factions (Outram 1997). As a result, 'ethnic' groups became more representative of political alliances than a shared cultural heritage.

### **1.2.2 United States/Liberia relations**

After Liberia gained its independence, Americo-Liberians maintained their cultural and familial ties to America but the United States was more interested in maintaining trade relations than in developing strong diplomatic ties with Liberia. In 1926, an American company called the Firestone Rubber Plantation set up the largest rubber plantation in the

world after signing a 99-year lease with the Liberian government. In exchange for a large tract of land, Firestone paid 6 cents per acre and provided the Liberian government with a large loan. Relying on a cheaper labour supply in Liberia, Firestone and other American rubber companies prospered, and the Liberian economy became more and more dependent on foreign investors to export Liberia's raw materials. Large investments in Liberia's iron ore mines were also made by American companies such as Bethlehem Steel Corporation and Republic Steel Corporation ([http....](http...))

As the Cold War escalated, the United States began to look beyond economic to its political interests in Liberia. By the 1980s, the United States had begun donating millions of dollars toward the development of Liberia in exchange for Liberia's support as a West African ally for the United States (Sesay 1996a). The fact that the United States was unwilling to intervene when civil war broke out in Liberia in 1989 coincided with the ending of the Cold War and the subsequent decline of Liberia's strategic importance to US foreign policy. Liberia's 'special relationship' with the United States was called into question, and many Liberians felt abandoned by the United States.

During the seven-year civil war (1989–96), Liberia's relations with the United States disintegrated further as a result of regional instability, gross human rights abuses, and governance problems in Liberia. However, recognising the large-scale humanitarian needs that persist, the United States continues to donate large amounts of relief to Liberia, which is channelled through the United Nations and other international aid and relief agencies working in the country. However, the amount of relief given has reduced significantly from \$37.8 million in 1989 to \$6.5 million in 2002, a decline of 82 per cent ([World Vision 2002](#)).

#### **Websites:**

US State Department, Background Notes 2001 - <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>

World Vision 2002, 'Africa's Weak States: US Policy Options in Liberia' - [http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/wvusuf0.nsf/stable/globalissues\\_criticalissues\\_liberia](http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/wvusuf0.nsf/stable/globalissues_criticalissues_liberia)

The Open Door Policy of Liberia: An Economic History of Modern Liberia (1847-1977)  
<http://www.liberiapastandpresent.org/OpenDoorPolicy.htm>

### **1.3 Culture**

Liberian culture was significantly influenced by the Americo-Liberians, who sought to imitate an American lifestyle in Liberia. Along with their political and economic domination, Americo-Liberians also projected a degree of social domination such that even among the indigenous community, all things *qui* (western) came to be respected and those things considered tribal, indigenous, or African were looked down upon.

The patrimonial leadership of Liberia's elite families was reinforced by Christianity and church membership. The church in Liberia is as old as Liberia itself, and many of the founders of the nation were in fact ministers (Gifford 1993). However, over time, even as the indigenous peoples became Christianised, the Americo-Liberians were also heavily influenced by the animistic religions of the indigenous peoples and participated in the rituals of the *poro* (for men) and *sande* (for women) secret societies. About 30 per cent of Liberians

are Christian, 60 per cent are animists and 10 per cent are Muslims. All people are entitled to freedom of religion in Liberia, and the government generally respects that, though in some cases the Muslim minority has complained of being discriminated against.

There has been some research on the way in which ritual killings, part of Liberia's 'traditional religions', became a strategy of intimidation utilised by rebels in the civil war (Ellis 1995, 1999). Reports of rebels wearing ritual masks, beheading victims and allegedly drinking blood and eating flesh shocked the world but were not necessarily new to Liberians who had seen these practices before the war on a limited scale. However, the widespread use of these practices by rebel soldiers signified a breakdown of traditional society, where ritual killings had previously been controlled by the authority of *zoes* (witch doctors).

English is the official language of Liberia, but there are sixteen indigenous languages also spoken, corresponding to sixteen ethnic groups. The Kpelle make up 20 per cent of the population, the Bassa 16 per cent, the Gio 8 per cent, the Kru 7 per cent, and the Americo-Liberians 5 per cent; the remaining 44 per cent are spread over twelve other ethnic groups. However, a considerable amount of intermarriage has blurred ethnic distinction.

#### **Websites:**

Culture in Liberia - <http://www.wealth24.com/liberia/culture.htm>

US Department of State, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 2000: Liberia - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/+cwwBmeMfJ69www1wwwwwwwxFqwqFqwmFqwnFqwhzme3-wwwwwwwtFqreoxnGowrFqwoFqwfqAFqqejhrmFmmDFme26btqt2IygZf3zmmwwwwww/rsddocview.html>

Languages of Liberia - [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=Liberia](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Liberia)

#### **1.4 Geography, society, and economy**

Liberia is one of the smaller countries in West Africa with a population of 3.2 million people. About 60 percent of the land is forest land; twenty percent is savannah; 6 percent is farmland; and 14 percent is residential. Along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean are flat plains that rise to a rolling plateau, with low mountains in the north-west. The climate is typically hot and humid, with heavy tropical rains in the summer and hot, dry days and cool to cold nights in the winter.

Land and Economy of Liberia - <http://pages.prodigy.net/jkess3/Land.html>

Historically, Liberia has enjoyed a measure of economic prosperity. During Tubman's presidency from 1943 to 1971, Liberia appeared to prosper under his 'Open Door' policy. From 1944 to 1960, total foreign investment in Liberia increased from \$32 million to \$436 million; total exports rose from \$10.3 million in 1944 to \$83 million in 1960; and favourable balance of trade increased from \$6 million to \$14 million. From 1960 to 1979, favourable balance of trade rose rapidly from \$14 million to \$30 million (link to <http://pages.prodigy.net/jkess3/Land.html>). It is reported that between 1952 and 1957, Liberia's economic growth rate was 15 percent a year, higher than anywhere else in the world except Japan (Gifford, 1993).

Unfortunately, foreign investors' gains did not translate into benefits for ordinary Liberians. Under the 'Open Door' policy, foreign investors were able to abuse Liberian government's lack of economic controls in order to make huge profits that did not benefit Liberia. Foreign firms took advantage of long tax holidays, long exemption periods of import and export duties, special tax tariffs and many and large tax deductible items in cases where they were liable to taxes. These loose policies made it possible for Firestone-Liberia, for example, to still retained a profit that amounted to three times the total income of the Liberian Treasury **after** taxes was paid to the Liberian Government in 1951. And revenues of the Liberian Mining Company, the country's first iron ore mine, surpassed the total revenues of the Liberian Government until 1960 (link to <http://www.vanderkraaij.net/FPM/LiberiaOnTheNet/OpenDoorPolicy.htm>).

Although Liberia appeared to prosper under the 'Open Door' policy, Liberia developed a dual economy such that the concession sector had little or no connection with the rest of the economy. In addition, Liberia's dependence on the export of raw materials made them vulnerable to changing market prices. In the 1970s and 1980s, more than half of Liberia's export earnings came from mining iron ore. However, the decline in demand for iron ore on the world market and political upheavals in Liberia have negatively affected the country's economic growth rate in more recent years.

Since the end of the civil war in 1997, timber, rubber and diamonds have become Liberia's main export items. Figures for Liberia's total exports are hard to come by since official government export figures do not match import figures from countries that trade with Liberia. For example, The Liberian Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy informed a UN Panel that 1998 official diamond exports totalled only 8,000 carats, valued at \$800,000. In the same year, Belgium recorded imports from Liberia by 26 companies, totalling 2.56 million carats, valued at \$217 million (UN Panel). Officially, Liberia earns more than \$100 million from timber exports annually, with an Indonesian-owned company called the Oriental Timber Corporation (OTC) having the largest timber concession. Rubber exports add up to more than \$70 million annually (State Department). In addition, gold mining account for some economic activity, though lack of accurate reporting makes it difficult to know how much.

Those who benefit from this trade are mostly foreigners of Lebanese and Indian descent who largely control Liberia's business sector as in the days of Tubman's 'Open Door' policy. Meanwhile, most ordinary Liberians struggle to make ends meet. Since GDP per capita data to calculate the decent standard of living dimension of human development was not available, the UN Human Development Index does not rank Liberia among other countries of the world (HDR). However, conditions in Liberia are difficult. . (where is it on the UN Human Devt Indiex?) Unemployment is as high as 85 percent and per capita income is one-third of pre-war levels with 50 percent of the population living in absolute poverty. Liberians fortunate enough to have jobs typically wait months to receive paycheques that average the equivalent of less than \$15 per month (USCR). The salaries of most government officials, including the military and militia groups, are at least six months in arrears (CrisisWeb).

In addition, much of Liberia's infrastructure was destroyed during the war and little has been done to rebuild it. The capital still lacks electricity and running water in most areas and is overcrowded with a population up to twice its pre-war size. Other indicators of Liberia's troubles include an adult literacy rate of 39 percent, and only 25 percent among

females(UNICEF). In 2000, Liberia's infant mortality rate was 157 per 1000 live births; the under five mortality rate was 235 per 1000; and 42 percent of the total population were undernourished (HDI).

Added to these problems, Liberia's foreign debt amounts to more than \$3 billion (State Department). Unwilling to fund an oppressive regime, in 1999 the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other representatives of the donor community offered \$230 million to Liberia on condition that Liberia demonstrate an improvement in economic reporting, fiscal discipline, and respect for human rights. Rather than accepting this responsibility, President Taylor has routinely asserted that the international community's failure to provide enough resources is what has limited Liberia's efforts to improve. Several donors have contributed to relief efforts, but most prefer to work through UN organisations rather than channelling funds directly through the Liberian government.

### **Websites:**

US State Department, Background Notes 2001 - <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>

US Committee for Refugees, 2002 Country Report - <http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/africa/liberia.htm>

UNICEF - <http://www.unicef.org/emerg/liberia>

CrisisWeb - <http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=741>

Human Rights Watch, 'The Role of the International Community' - <http://www.hrw.org/worldreport99/africa/liberia3.html>

Liberia's Land and Economy <http://pages.prodigy.net/jkess3/Land.html>

The Open Door Policy of Liberia: An Economic History of Modern Liberia (1847-1977) <http://www.liberiapastandpresent.org/OpenDoorPolicy.htm>

UN Panel on Exports Report on Diamonds and Arms in Sierra Leone and Liberia <http://www.sierra-leone.org/panelreport-I.html>

Human Development Report 2002. To access the limited data available on Liberia, "Download ZIP with Excel Files - Part 2 (706KB)", or see available data on Table 30 Basic Indicators for countries where HDI was not calculable, p. 251 of HDR 2002.

## **2 Causes and consequences**

### **2.1 The business of war**

The protracted nature of Liberia's civil war is explained in large part by economics, or perhaps better stated: greed. Various warlords emerged during the course of the war, all scrambling for opportunities to control and profit from Liberia's rich natural resources (Reno 1996). Of all the warlords, Taylor proved most adept at cultivating sources of foreign exchange, allowing him to arm his soldiers and conquer areas with easily exploitable resources. He encouraged business as usual in territories that he controlled, exporting iron

ore, diamonds, and timber from his zone in return for taxes, which were paid to him personally.

In addition, during the war rebel leaders promised new recruits the opportunity for personal enrichment through looting. The United Nations estimated that there were 60,000 combatants in the civil war of whom few had received any formal military training and none of whom was paid (Kamara 1999). Guns provided rebel soldiers with a livelihood during the war, giving them a chance to seize resources they could not get legitimately in a system so long corrupted by patronage and clientelism. As the war progressed, vengeance, hatred, self-defence, and survival undoubtedly motivated rebel fighters, but economic motivations were a chief catalyst to the fighting.

Since the civil war, Charles Taylor has been implicated for using his resources to support the brutal rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. For this reason, the United Nations imposed sanctions on Liberia in May 2001 to block Liberian diamond sales, to restrict international travel by top Liberian officials, and to sustain the arms embargo (UN Security Council, Resolution 1343). A UN investigation found, however, that Liberian officials were effectively circumventing the arms embargo, which led the UN to extend sanctions for another year until May 2003. In addition, groups such as Global Witness have raised concerns that the Liberian government is utilising profits from its timber industry, to finance regional conflict.

#### **Websites:**

Global Witness - [http://www.globalwitness.org/press\\_releases/display2.php?id=147](http://www.globalwitness.org/press_releases/display2.php?id=147)

UN, 'Security Council Resolutions Concerning the Situation in Liberia Pursuant to Resolution 1343' (2001) -

<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/Liberia2/Liberia2ResEng.htm>

## **2.2 Regional involvement**

Calling Liberia's 1989–96 war a 'civil' war is perhaps misleading, in that the word 'civil' implies that all actors in the conflict were internal, which is far from the truth. Taylor made alliances with Libya, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire that made it possible for him to train and arm his forces; Côte d'Ivoire was also complicit in permitting him to launch his 1989 attack from their border. In addition, some of the ethnic Krahn and Mandingo in Doe's armed forces formed alliances with the government of Sierra Leone, allowing them to escape into Sierra Leone to flee Taylor's forces and to regroup as the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO) before entering the fray once again.

Meanwhile, the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) formed the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), supplying a peacekeeping force comprised primarily of Nigerian and Ghanaian soldiers who remained in Monrovia from 1990 to the end of the war. ECOWAS was headed by Nigeria's President Babangida, a friend and ally of President Doe, which contributed to Taylor's unwillingness to recognise the interim government that ECOWAS set up in Monrovia in the early 1990s. As the conflict became more protracted, reports are that ECOMOG soldiers who were underpaid and understaffed entered into deals with warring factions, thus also benefiting from the 'business of war'.

More recently, Taylor has accused the governments of Sierra Leone and Guinea of supporting LURD rebels. In an effort to deal with the situation, the Liberian government expelled the ambassadors and diplomats from those two countries and closed its borders with them for a time. LURD is reportedly composed of former fighters from the 1989–96 civil war, many of whom became refugees in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea after the war.

**Websites:**

Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa (IRIN-WA) - [http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West\\_Africa](http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West_Africa)

### **2.3 Continuing conflict**

Since 1999, LURD has engaged in rebel activity, primarily in Liberia's northern Lofa County. However, the violence has slowly made its way closer to Monrovia. In February 2002, the government of Liberia declared a state of emergency, blaming its failure to defeat the rebels on the UN arms embargo placed on the country.

Rather than responding with support for the Liberian government, the international community has displayed a general distrust of and lack of sympathy toward Charles Taylor. For example, a number of conspiracy theories have been postulated regarding the events leading to the February 2002 state of emergency. Many diplomats, aid workers, and Liberian journalists believed that the Taylor government may have engineered or manipulated the conflict in northern Liberia in order to create another humanitarian crisis that would win international sympathy and lead to a re-evaluation of the arms embargo placed on Liberia. However, suspicions of duplicity lack solid evidence, and LURD has continued to attack government forces closer to the capital, suggesting that Taylor has limited control over the situation. LURD does not appear to have the military strength to take the capital, but tensions remain high and any attack on Monrovia would likely cause widespread panic and trigger more internal displacement.

The general consensus of most reports coming from Liberia is that the country is on the brink of returning to war and violence that would jeopardise the fragile peace in Sierra Leone and further destabilise the region. Human rights groups and aid agencies are calling for the international community to engage with the Liberia problem rather than ignore it and hope it will go away. There is need to prioritise stricter monitoring of violations of the arms embargo, to extend the arms embargo to the LURD rebel forces, to broker a cease-fire agreement with LURD, and to limit Charles Taylor's ongoing negative influence in the region.

**Websites:**

Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa (IRIN-WA) - [http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West\\_Africa](http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West_Africa)

Global IDP Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council (2002), Liberia Information Menu - <http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Liberia>

CrisisWeb - <http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=741>

LURD Website - <http://www.copla.org/aboutlurd.htm>

## 2.4 Conflict-induced displacement

The extent of indiscriminate violence and civil unrest during the civil war was such that virtually all of the country's approximately 3 million people had to flee their homes at one time or another, sometimes for a few weeks and in many cases for several years. However, official figures estimate that 1.2 million were internally displaced and 700,000 were refugees at the war's end. Now, with continuing conflict and resulting displacement in Liberia, efforts to categorise and count Liberia's displaced populations are complicated by the fact that old caseload and new caseload refugees cohabit in exile. In addition, within Liberia's borders, returnees mingle with IDPs, some of whom have been displaced for years and others who have recently left their homes in search of safety. Sierra Leonean and Ivorian refugees are also added to the mix of displaced people within Liberia's borders.

### 2.4.1 Refugees

The first refugees to flee Liberia escaped on evacuation flights and ships sent to Liberia by Sierra Leone and Ghana to transport their nationals. However, as the situation worsened, thousands of Liberians fled by land and sea to safety using whatever resources they had to pay their passage or to bribe their way to safety. Many endured gruelling journeys on foot through the bush or by ship. The most publicised of these journeys was the voyage of some 2,250 Liberian refugees on the *Bulk Challenge* ship in May 1996. Denied admission to Côte d'Ivoire, the ship was forced to continue on its way to Ghana where it was also not welcomed until promises of European Union and United Nations assistance were made, which finally led the Ghanaian government to allow refugees to disembark. This incident challenged the notion of African hospitality, highlighting the realities of growing host-fatigue and concerns of the national security threat that could be posed if Liberian rebels were included among the new arrivals (USCR, 'Liberia's Refugee Crisis').

Liberian refugees were granted refugee status en masse, or on a prima facie basis, in surrounding West African states, all signatories of the UN Convention and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) refugee conventions. While the UN definition of a refugee is orientated to the individual, the OAU Convention applies to the Liberia case, offering protection for people in cases of 'external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or *events seriously disrupting the public order*' (emphasis added).

At the beginning of the crisis, when the refugees first arrived in host countries they were typically assisted by the local populations. However, host governments quickly invited UNHCR to assist the refugees. In Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana, and Nigeria, refugees were primarily assisted in camps. However, in Côte d'Ivoire, the government invited UNHCR assistance but was opposed to camps, preferring refugees to settle freely among the local population in a restricted region in the western part of the country known as the *Zone d'Accueil des Refugies* (ZAR). In addition, in each of the host countries, an unrecorded number of refugees settled outside of the camps and restricted areas, fending for themselves rather than relying on UNHCR assistance.

At the conclusion of the civil war, UNHCR began a repatriation program to assist Liberians wishing to return home. From 1997 to 1999, about 350,000 to 400,000 Liberian refugees repatriated with at least 40,000 more returnees joining them during 2000. However, by 2000 reports of renewed violence, particularly in Lofa County, discouraged more refugees from returning home, and only 2,000 refugees were repatriated during 2001 (USCR). Recognising

that conditions were worsening in Liberia, the UNHCR suspended its formal repatriation program and ceased most reintegration projects in late 2000 and 2001 (see 3.1 Refugees in exile).

**Websites:**

USCR, Country Report - <http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/africa/liberia.htm>

USCR, 'Liberia's Refugee Crisis: Africa Reconsiders Its Tradition of Hospitality' - [http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/liberian\\_rr96\\_7.htm](http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/liberian_rr96_7.htm)

**2.4.2 IDPs**

The UN estimated that by 1997, after seven years of civil war in Liberia, there were 750,000 persons displaced within the country. By the end of 1999, an estimated 90 per cent of Liberia's IDPs had returned home (USCR). UNDP funded an IDP reintegration programme, and the agency assisted over 130,000 IDPs to return to their homes from 1997 to early 2000. Many other IDPs returned home on their own, unassisted.

However, conflict between pro- and anti-government forces in Lofa County from 2000 to the present has resulted in large numbers of newly displaced Liberians. Though the number of newly internally placed people in Liberia is hard to pin down, August 2002 estimates ranged between 90,000 and 200,000. By October 2000, WFP reported that they were assisting 183,900 IDPs living in fourteen camps for IDPs primarily located in the suburbs of Monrovia, Totota, and CARI (Global IDP Database).

Several factors have converged to make assistance for Liberian IDPs less than adequate. First, aid agencies have repeatedly been unable to access people displaced inside conflict zones. By the end of 2000, there was no non-governmental organisation (NGO) or UN agency working in Lofa County. Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) had been assisting Kolahun Hospital in Upper Lofa, but pulled out because of fighting in the area. In addition, rebel activity on the road to Monrovia has made it impossible to reach certain areas (ICRC).

Second, concerns have been raised that international opposition against Liberia's government has translated into inadequate provision of assistance for Liberia's IDPs. Potential donors are very wary of Taylor's regime and reluctant to support it, which unfortunately has meant that food, medicines, clean drinking water, and adequate shelter are typically in short supply. Since 1989, development assistance to Liberia declined by approximately \$100 million a year to less than \$30 million in 2001. As a result, Medecins Sans Frontieres Belgium had to reduce support to Monrovia's main hospital, Save the Children UK was unable to fund nine out of nineteen health clinics, and UNICEF's funding dropped from \$9.3 million in 1998 to \$3.7 million in 2000 (OCHA News 2001).

Third, until February 2002, the lack of a Humanitarian Co-ordinator weakened the effectiveness of aid agency responses to IDP needs. Efforts are currently being made to set better institutional arrangements and co-ordination mechanisms, building on lessons learned in Sierra Leone. The OCHA IDP Unit that went to Liberia in April 2002 has facilitated this process by assessing protection issues and making recommendations for improving assistance.

**Websites:**

Global IDP Database: Liberia Information Menu -  
<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Liberia>

IOM 2002, 'Liberia: IOM Assesses the IDP Situation' -  
[http://www.idpproject.org/weekly\\_news/2002/weekly\\_news\\_oct02\\_2.htm](http://www.idpproject.org/weekly_news/2002/weekly_news_oct02_2.htm)

ICRC, Annual Report 2000 -  
[http://www.icrc.org/WEBGRAPH.NSF/Graphics/AC\\_AF\\_LIBERIA\\_AR.pdf/\\$FILE/AC\\_AF\\_LIBERIA\\_AR.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/WEBGRAPH.NSF/Graphics/AC_AF_LIBERIA_AR.pdf/$FILE/AC_AF_LIBERIA_AR.pdf)

US Committee for Refugees, 2002 Country Report -  
<http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/africa/liberia.htm>

OCHA, 'IDP Unit Report on Mission to West Africa, 15–24 Apr 2002' -  
<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/f303799b16d2074285256830007fb33f/52d62ae9bcb78e6685256bc00067c9e2?OpenDocument>

OCHA, 'Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Liberia 2003' -  
<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/9ca65951ee22658ec125663300408599/0a1a2e040e0518dbc1256c6f0038623b?OpenDocument>

OCHA, News 2001 - [http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/pub/ochanews/on170801.PDF](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/ochanews/on170801.PDF)

### **2.4.3 Sierra Leonean refugees**

Ironically, not only has Liberia produced large numbers of refugees, but it has simultaneously hosted large numbers of refugees. Tens of thousands of refugees fled from Sierra Leone to Liberia during the 1990s to escape civil war, but found Liberia to be a worse option than their own war-ravaged country, causing thousands of them to repatriate. About 30,000 Sierra Leonean refugees live in Lofa County, many of them on their own; about 8,000 are being hosted in camps near the Liberia-Sierra Leone border, which have repeatedly been inaccessible to aid workers due to outbreaks of violence in the area. Four refugee camps closer to Monrovia – Banjor, Samukai, VOA-1, and Zuannah – host another 30,000 to 35,000 Sierra Leoneans who receive assistance from the UN and other aid agencies. Recent Liberian IDPs are now being assisted in these camps along with Sierra Leoneans.

#### **Websites:**

US Committee for Refugees, 2002 Country Report -  
<http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/africa/liberia.htm>

## **2.5 Vulnerable populations**

During Liberia's civil war, everyone was vulnerable to acts of indiscriminate violence. However, women and children were especially susceptible to serious abuse.

### **2.5.1 Child soldiers**

Rebel groups recruited as many as 10,000 child soldiers under the age of 18. Many of them were forcibly taken from their families and fought in order to survive. These children were typically from war zones and were economically disadvantaged and deprived of educational opportunities. High on drugs to inoculate them against fear and armed with submachine guns,

they became perpetrators of violence. After the war, around 4,300 child soldiers were demobilised and disarmed, and reintegration programmes for them were introduced. However, lack of adequate employment and educational opportunities has left them vulnerable to reverting back to violence as a way to survive. Reports are that once again rebel groups are re-arming some of these child soldiers and forcibly conscripting new IDP children to fight against Taylor's government.

**Websites:**

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers - <http://www.child-soldiers.org/cs/childsoldiers.nsf/>

Human Rights Watch, 'Easy Prey: Child Soldiers in Liberia' - <http://www.hrw.org/reports/world/liberia-pubs.php>

Jubilee Action, 'Liberia's Child Soldiers' - <http://www.jubileearction.co.uk/reports/Liberia's%20child%20soldiers.pdf>

**2.5.2 Women**

Women in Liberia and those in exile have also endured much injustice. The frequency of rape by both rebel and government forces in the civil war and in the current conflict suggest that it has been used as a tool of war to intimidate the civilian population. In some cases, girls have identified high-ranking government officials as rapists (Amnesty International 2001). Little has been done to bring perpetrators to justice, giving license to others to continue the practice unchecked.

In addition, desperate economic conditions in Liberia and in refugee camps have led many women to engage in concubinage (Kaiser 2001, Dick 2002) While prostitution does go on, the more common scenario is for women, particularly those who are heads of households or young girls who lack adequate familial support, to enter into a relationship with a man providing him with sexual favours in exchange for his economic support for herself and her children.

In refugee camps in West Africa, it was discovered that aid workers exchanged food rations for sex with children, causing an international scandal. An unspecified number of interviewees complained that they or their children had to have sex in order to get food and favours. Those implicated included over 40 aid agencies, including the UNHCR itself, and sixty-seven individuals, mostly local staff named by the children. UNHCR responded with various measures to curtail this behaviour, including greater security measures in the camp, hiring an increased number of female staff, and improving the system for hearing refugee complaints.

NGO and UNHCR workers in IDP camps have made efforts to address the issue of domestic violence, which while not new in Liberia is perhaps exacerbated by the difficult conditions of living in an economically and politically unstable environment. In November 2002, a sixteen-day UNHCR-sponsored programme brought together more than 200 refugees, both men and women, as well as other war-affected persons from the Samukai Town, Zuanah Town, Banjor, and VOA refugee camps to address ways of improving domestic situations for women in a way that is culturally relevant (allAfrica.com News). These efforts, while

important, have involved a very small proportion of the population, thus limiting the impact of interventions.

**Websites:**

BBC News, 'Child Refugee Sex Scandal' - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1842512.stm>

allAfrica.com, 'UNHCR, Partners Launch 16 Days of Activities Against Gender Based Violence' - <http://allafrica.com/stories/200211260143.html>

**2.6 Legal framework**

As one of the founding members of the UN, Liberia is signatory to a number of treaties which include the following: the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Liberia was also one of the principal countries supporting the founding of the Organisation of African Unity. However, the days when Liberia's presidents acted as international spokespersons and contributed to the formation of international legal standards have seemingly come to an end. Although a variety of legal instruments have been signed and the internationally accepted freedoms for citizens are protected in law, all too often what happens in practice is another story.

In his victory and inauguration speeches, President Taylor declared his intention to head a government that respected human rights. In 1997, he put actions to his words by setting up the Human Rights Commission. However, the effectiveness of the Commission has been hijacked by the fact that the Commission's mandate was hastily drafted with little external input from experts in the field. A group of NGOs protested and submitted amendments for consideration, which were promptly dismissed. Taylor described their revised bill as 'an attempt to tie the hands of the President'. The Commission lacks the power of subpoena and enforcement powers, and funding for the Commission is up to the President's discretion, giving him significant control over the Commission.

**Websites:**

Human Rights Commission Act, October 1997 - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/+dwwBmVeXEudwwwMwwwwwwwwwFqrPoxnGowcFqo-uPPyER0MFmqDFme26btqo2IyP0HEP3zmxwwwwwwGFqmPF2BFqtl2bgRj/rsddocview.html>

Human Rights Internet, 'Treaties: Ratifications and Reservations' - <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2000/vol2/liberiarr.htm>

Human Rights Watch, 'Protectors or Pretenders? Government Human Rights Commissions in Africa: Liberia' - <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/africa/liberia/liberia.html>

**2.7 Human rights**

Liberia's human rights record, both during the war and after, is sullied with reports of extra-judicial killings, rape, illegal detentions, and torture. Human Rights Watch investigations (2002) of the Liberian government revealed that human rights violations were being perpetrated with impunity. Thousands of men and boys accused of being 'dissidents' have

been illegally detained, and some executed, by the government. Women fleeing fighting have reportedly been caught at checkpoints and raped by soldiers. Using the rebel threat as an excuse, the government is re-arming combatants and encouraging local militias. Men and boys are being recruited coercively without receiving proper military training. In addition, since the February 2002 state of emergency, a number of journalists have been illegally detained in Taylor's efforts to muzzle the press.

Though not to the same extent as the government, the rebel group LURD has also been implicated for human rights abuses, raping, killing, and detaining supposed government-supporters.

Outside groups have made efforts to address the situation, but with little success. In 2000, the Carter Center closed down their offices in Liberia due to 'prevailing conditions' in the country and the actions of the Liberian government that impeded their human rights work. The European Union invited the Liberian government to engage in a human rights consultation in 2001. Changes needed in the realm of politics, the judicial system, economics, and finance were agreed upon, but implementation of changes has been slow in coming, and the extent of human rights violations perpetrated has not been convincingly reduced.

#### **Websites:**

Amnesty International, Index of Human Rights Concerns - <http://web.amnesty.org/library/eng-lbr/index>

Amnesty International, 2002 Annual Report: Liberia - <http://web.amnesty.org/web/ar2002.nsf/afr/liberia!Open>

Human Rights Watch, archive of Liberia reports - <http://www.hrw.org/africa/liberia.php>

Human Rights Watch (2002), 'Back to the Brink: War Crimes by Liberian Government and Rebels' - <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/liberia/Liberia0402.pdf>

US Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Liberia - <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8388.htm>

### **3 Needs and responses**

#### **3.1 Refugees in exile**

The lack of peace and security in Liberia has contributed to the protracted Liberian refugee situations in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Ghana, as well as in Sierra Leone and Nigeria where Liberian refugee numbers are fewer. Unfortunately, throughout the 1990s donors became increasingly unwilling to fund programmes for Liberian refugees, and the crisis in Sierra Leone diverted donor priorities. As a result, UNHCR has been unable to fund assistance to the approximately 215,000 Liberian refugees who remained in exile at the end of 2001 (USCR).

Unable to return home and no longer assisted by UNHCR, many Liberian refugees in exile in West Africa are caught in a state of limbo. Having re-established themselves in exile for many years, they are typically no longer in need of emergency relief, but they struggle to find a viable livelihood, to find adequate medical care and to educate their children. UNHCR assistance, which took on the form of 'care and maintenance' programmes throughout the

1990s, appears to have done little to address the evolving needs of refugees. Funding for development is greatly needed, but donors are generally not interested in supporting development programmes for Liberian refugees in protracted situations. And while local integration was a possibility for Liberians, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire and in Guinea where Liberians have ethnic links, the ongoing turmoil in the region has increasingly made Liberian refugees unwanted guests.

### **3.1.1 Guinea**

Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees were assisted in over 60 formal camps as well as in surrounding villages along the Sierra Leone–Guinea border as of 2001. Many of the Liberians had first found refuge in Sierra Leone, but fled with the Sierra Leoneans to Guinea when conflict began in their country.

In 2000, UNHCR phased out assistance to the 90,000 Liberian refugees remaining in Guinea, expecting them to be self-sufficient. Relations between refugees and their hosts have been generally good, allowing refugees to survive through employment on local Guinean farms and through petty trade. However, the degree to which old caseload refugees can be self-reliant is constrained by limited access to land, lack or late arrival of seeds, low wages for daily labour due to a labour surplus, limitations on freedom of movement due to lack of ID cards, and the absence of employment opportunities for the educated (Kaiser 2001). In addition, the withdrawal of UNHCR assistance has meant that food security is a big problem for refugees, as is medical care.

UNHCR still maintains a presence in Guinea, offering assistance to new arrivals from Lofa County, Liberia. However, the souring of relations between the Liberian and Guinean governments, with each accusing the other of supporting rebel groups bent on toppling their respective regimes, has led to the closing of the Liberia–Guinea border at various times, first by Liberia and then by Guinea. Liberians wishing to flee to Guinea for safety have been diverted to Sierra Leone and other places as a result.

#### **Websites:**

Kaiser, T. (2001) 'A Beneficiary-Based Evaluation of UNHCR's Programme in Guinea, West Africa' - [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+iwwBmeX7fq\\_wwwqwwwwwwwwhFqo20I0E2gltFqoGn5nwGqrAFqo20I0E2glcFqtAwo5nGDzmxwwwwww/.opendoc.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+iwwBmeX7fq_wwwqwwwwwwwwhFqo20I0E2gltFqoGn5nwGqrAFqo20I0E2glcFqtAwo5nGDzmxwwwwww/.opendoc.pdf)

### **3.1.2 Côte d'Ivoire**

An estimated 100,000 Liberians were living among the local populations, not in camps, in Côte d'Ivoire as of 2001. The government's liberal refugee policy and the fact that many Liberians had kinship relations with the local Ivorian populations made it easier for them to settle there and to engage in trade and business. Prospects for local integration were very good, but it appears that important and needed development opportunities were lost because UNHCR carried on with care and maintenance programmes too long. A controversial UNHCR effort to incorporate English-speaking Liberian children into French-speaking Ivorian schools also backfired and was discontinued as a result.

However, Côte d'Ivoire began experiencing troubles of its own beginning in 2000. Believing that Liberian fighters are assisting the rebel-opposition in Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian government is no longer so welcoming to Liberian refugees. With this growing antagonism,

Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire are caught in a no-win situation since many of them have links to the Krahn and Mandingo and would likely be targeted by Taylor's government forces if they returned home. Nonetheless, an estimated 43,000 Liberians have decided to take the risk of returning home while an additional 40,000 remain in Côte d'Ivoire in grave danger (Amnesty International 2003). By February 2003, it was reported that 88,000 Liberian returnees and Ivorian refugees had entered Liberia to escape the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (UNHCR 2003).

**Websites:**

Kuhlman, T. (2002) 'Responding to protracted refugee situations: A case study of Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire' - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RESEARCH&id=3d4006412&page=research>

UNHCR (2003), 'Thousands Flee Liberia's Conflict; UNHCR tries to repatriate Sierra Leoneans' - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+dwwBme8TG1KwwwwnwwwwwwFqnN0bItFqnDni5AFqnN0bIcFqrcoxnGowDzmxwwwwww/opendoc.htm>

Amnesty International (2003), 'Côte d'Ivoire: Liberian Refugees at Imminent Risk' - <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/AFR340032003!Open>

**3.1.3 Ghana**

In 2000, UNHCR assistance to 9,000 Liberian refugees remaining in Buduburam camp, near Accra, Ghana, was also withdrawn. Refugees enjoy complete freedom of movement with easy access to transport into Accra, making it possible for them to engage in wage labour, small businesses and petty trade to support themselves without UNHCR assistance. Those who have friends and relatives in the United States often have the advantage of receiving remittances sent via Western Union money transfers. As a result of these advantages, the camp has developed into a town with electricity, stores, nightclubs, a market, and over fifty churches. However, many Liberian refugees still struggle to make ends meet in a host environment with high levels of unemployment and inflation. Refugee churches and community-based organisations have rallied to try to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, but the needs are typically greater than the resources available.

Matters for Liberian refugees in Ghana are further complicated by the fact that the host government conducted a screening exercise in 2001 to reassess the claims of Liberian refugees who had been granted refugee status on a prima facie basis. Only 3,449 of 9,000 interviewed were granted refugee status, but those denied refugee status have continued to remain in Ghana as de facto refugees.

Liberians in Ghana are not eager to return home given the reports of continued violence. In addition, a resettlement programme to the United States acts as a draw for many Liberians who feel that there is no other viable alternative for them (see section on the United States and Canada).

**Websites:**

Dick, S. (2002), 'Responding to protracted refugee situations: A case study of Liberian refugees in Ghana' - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RESEARCH&id=3d40059b4&page=research>

Dick, S. (2002), 'Liberians in Ghana: Living Without Humanitarian Assistance' - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+9wwBmej46HswwwwnwwwwwwwhFqo20I0E2glTFqoGn5nwGqrAFqo20I0E2glcFqrcoxnGowDzmxwwwwww/opendoc.pdf>

### **3.1.4 United States and Canada**

Large numbers of Liberians have made their way to the United States, and to a lesser extent Canada, since the beginning of the war. The US resettlement programme is based on five processing priorities, with Priority 1 cases being persons at risk or those with no long-term solution who are identified by the US embassy or referred by UNHCR. Priority 2 cases are groups of special concern to the US embassy, and Priority 3 to 5 cases are for family reunification. Each year the US Congress sets a ceiling for the number of refugees to be admitted. In 1992, 1993, and 1994, the number of Liberian refugees resettled to the US was 637, 961, and 610 respectively. In 1995, only fifty-two Priority 1 cases were admitted, and the family reunification option was effectively shut down, largely because of concerns of fraud.

Many Liberian refugees are desperate for the opportunity to resettle in the USA and will go to great lengths to try to meet the necessary criteria. Many have legitimate claims, but concerns have also been raised that some claims are fraudulent. Family meetings to verify information before resettlement interviews, the purchase of spaces on the affidavit of relationship, and fabrication of stories are all strategies that have been used to get on the resettlement programme (Dick 2001).

In spite of these problems, it was recognised that the family reunification resettlement program is an important and legitimate, durable solution for many; thus it was reopened, with the number of Liberians admitted rising as high as 2,613 in 2000. According to USCR, a total of 9,143 Liberian refugees have been admitted to the USA from 1987 to 2000. Also potentially adding to future higher numbers is the USA's decision to open a resettlement processing office in Accra in 2001 in order to facilitate a more efficient process. Until 2001, all resettlement cases were processed out of Nairobi by the Joint Voluntary Association (JVA) in a cumbersome process that required circuit riders to travel out to West Africa to process claims. However, in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, the number of refugees being resettled to the USA significantly reduced, but the resettlement programme continues.

Before the war, it was primarily the Americo-Liberians and Liberia's wealthier citizens that were able to travel to the USA, and many Liberian leaders including Charles Taylor have spent significant periods of time in the USA. The resettlement programme has contributed to the growth of networks between Liberians in the USA and those in exile in West Africa, and refugees who remain behind look to their USA-based counterparts to send remittances, an important coping strategy.

#### **Websites:**

USCR, 'Liberia's Refugee Crisis: Africa Reconsiders Its Tradition of Hospitality' - [http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/liberian\\_rr96\\_7.htm](http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/liberian_rr96_7.htm)

USCR, 'Refugees Admitted to the United States by Nationality, FY 1987-2000' - [http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/nationality\\_rr00\\_12.cfm](http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/nationality_rr00_12.cfm)

Dick, S. (2002), 'Liberians in Ghana: Living Without Humanitarian Assistance' - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+9wwBmej46HswwwwnwwwwwwwhFqo20I0E2glTFqoGn5nwGqrAFqo20I0E2glcFqrcoxnGowDzmxwwwwww/opendoc.pdf>

### **3.2 Civil society**

Ordinary Liberians are exhausted from years of war, and they long for peace, but Taylor has persistently used strong-arm tactics to silence opposition voices that are not backed with a gun. Journalists, human rights defenders, and lawyers have been detained without sufficient cause. This pervading atmosphere of intimidation and fear has severely crippled the potential positive impact of Liberia's civil society.

Recognising that external actors are limited in their ability to bring sustainable peace to Liberia, efforts are being made to support and strengthen Liberian civil society and to encourage an atmosphere in which information can be made more accessible to the public through the media. In 2002, representatives of Liberia's media, civic organisations, traditional and academic communities, and religious institutions met together to draft the Monrovia Declaration, which calls for civil society to work against conflict-prone situations that could undermine the attainment of sustainable peace. Adding financial strength to these efforts, USAID is funding programmes that involve civil society in voters' education and election monitoring, in an effort to encourage the democratic process in Liberia's upcoming elections. Community groups involved in formal and non-formal education, civic education, human rights and the rule of law are also being supported.

#### **Websites:**

Monrovia Declaration - <http://www.allaboutliberia.com/>

USAID, Assistance to Liberia - <http://www.usaid.gov/country/afr/Liberia.pdf>

### **3.3 Government assistance to IDPs**

In an effort to meet the needs of IDPs and returning refugees, Taylor set up the Liberian Refugee, Resettlement, and Repatriation Commission (LRRRC). Relying on international funds from the International Red Cross, the British Red Cross, the Swedish aid agency, SIDA, and the Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) was able to relocate over 126,000 IDPs since 1998.

The LRRRC has full responsibility for assisting IDPs, and oversees camp management and co-ordination of relief. However, LRRRC's capacity to adequately do this job has been called into question. Aid agencies are concerned that the organisation is not equipped with the funds and technical and logistical expertise needed to fulfil its mandate. Humanitarian agencies have expressed concern that IDP camps are not adequately equipped with safe drinking water and proper sanitation. As a result, dysentery and cholera outbreaks have been a problem (IRC 2002). In addition, the government has failed to provide adequate protection for refugees and IDPs in camps. Recognising the urgency of the situation, the OCHA-IDP Unit recommended that an IDP protection expert be deployed immediately to assist the Humanitarian Co-ordinator in setting out common protection standards and indicators to guide the implementation of assistance in the various programmatic sectors (OCHA April 2002).

In an effort to more effectively meet the needs of IDPs, Taylor formed the National Humanitarian Task Force in March 2002. The Task Force, headed by his wife, reportedly distributed 125 metric tons of rice plus 9,700 packages of assorted clothes to 34,000 IDPs in four camps around Monrovia (OCHA Feb–Mar 2002). However, given the extent of the needs, much more assistance is required.

**Websites:**

International Rescue Committee (2002), ‘Health Assessment: Internally Displaced Camps in Liberia’ -

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/9ca65951ee22658ec125663300408599/19d5f2041819251b85256c450064da3d?OpenDocument>

OCHA, ‘Liberia Weekly Situation Report: 22 Feb–7 Mar 2002’ -

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/6686f45896f15dbc852567ae00530132/c850deeda267ecb085256b75006fb834?OpenDocument>

OCHA, ‘IDP Unit Report on Mission to West Africa, 15–24 Apr 2002’ -

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/f303799b16d2074285256830007fb33f/52d62ae9bcb78e6685256bc00067c9e2?OpenDocument>

**3.4 Peace process**

The possibilities for a regional solution to recent fighting in Liberia were promising in early 2002 after the presidents of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea met in Morocco to discuss cross-border security. However, not long after, all progress seemed to evaporate when Liberia accused Guinea of assisting rebels and Liberia rejected the ECOWAS cease-fire proposal. It appears almost impossible to get all relevant parties to the same negotiating table. Peace talks in Burkina Faso included rebel leaders and civil organisations, but the government was absent; and rebel leaders were notably absent from a government-sponsored conflict resolution conference in Monrovia. ECOWAS is still hopeful that it can broker a peaceable solution to the problem before conflict escalates, but Taylor has remained uncooperative and isolated.

**3.5 International assistance**

While the international community has rallied to assist Liberia’s IDPs and to help the country begin to rebuild infrastructure, disillusionment with Taylor’s corrupt government has led to a decline in overall from about \$138 million in 1998 to about \$30 million in 2001. The EU and USAID have been the primary funders of health, nutrition, and education programs, the EU giving \$24 million in July 2001 and the US government giving \$6.5 million in 2002. A programme funded by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization has assisted war-affected farmers, and WHO has programmes to address the reproductive health, disease control, and drug and medical supply needs of IDPs.

In 2002, UNHCR assisted thousands of IDPs who came from areas of renewed violence in northern Liberia to four camps in the Monrovia area that were originally intended for Sierra Leonean refugees. The International Red Cross and UNICEF have also responded to the needs of the newly displaced, distributing needed emergency supplies to them. UNICEF also oversees child protection programmes and the emergency education needs of 30,000 displaced children. WFP had been assisting 45,000 IDPs along with 24,500 Sierra Leonean

refugees in January 2002, but with the spread of fighting between government and rebel forces, numbers of IDPs in need of food aid jumped to 126,000 by August 2002.

Most of the organisations that were a part of assistance efforts during Liberia's war have stayed on to assist IDPs and to assist with post-war reconstruction. However, as conflict heats up again, these organisations are revising their programs in order to meet the needs of the newly displaced for shelter, water, and sanitation; non-food items; medical care; and counselling.

**NGOs working in Liberia:**

Action Aid

<http://www.actionaid.org/>

Action by Churches Together (ACT)

<http://act-intl.org/>

Action Contre la Faim (ACF)

<http://www.acf-fr.org/>

Catholic Relief Services

<http://www.catholicrelief.org/index.cfm>

Concerned Christian Council

<http://www.act-intl.org>

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

<http://www.ifrc.org/>

International Rescue Committee

<http://www.theirc.org/Liberia/>

Liberian Red Cross

<http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/partner/lrprofil.asp>

Lutheran World Federation

<http://www.lutheranworld.org>

Medecins Sans Frontieres

<http://www.msf.org>

Oxfam

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/atwork/where/africa/liberia.htm>

Save the Children Fund

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/>

Search for Common Ground

<http://www.sfcg.org/>

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)

<http://www.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/>

World Vision

<http://www.worldvision.org>

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)

<http://www.ymca.net/yworld/Liberia.htm>

**UN organisations working in Liberia:**

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

<http://www.fao.org/>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

<http://www.undp.org/>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

<http://www.unhcr.org/>

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

<http://www.unicef.org/>

World Food Programme (WFP)

<http://www.wfp.org/>

World Health Organization (WHO)

<http://www.who.org/>

**Websites:**

OCHA, 'Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Liberia 2003' -

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/9ca65951ee22658ec125663300408599/0a1a2e040e0518dbc1256c6f0038623b?OpenDocument>

UNICEF - <http://www.unicef.org/emerg/Country/Liberia/030120.PDF>

Global IDP Database: Liberia Information Menu -

<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Liberia>

**4 Other resources**

**4.1 Liberian news sources**

All about Liberia <http://www.allaboutliberia.com/news.htm>

Liberia Orbit <http://www.liberiaorbit.org/>

New Democrat <http://www.newdemocrat.org/>

The Perspective <http://www.theperspective.org/>

Liberia Post <http://www.liberianews.com/>

allAfrica.com News <http://allafrica.com/liberia/>

Relief Web

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/vLCE/West+Africa?OpenDocument&StartKey=West+Africa&ExpandView>

## **4.2 Links to other Liberia Websites** <http://www.theperspective.org/websites.html>

### **4.3 Liberian organisations**

Liberians United For Reconciliation And Democracy (LURD)

<http://www.copla.org/aboutlurd.htm>

Republic of Liberia Contemporoes United Patriotic & Strong

<http://www.republicofliberia.com/>

Measuagoon

<http://www.measuagoon.freemove.co.uk/>

Liberian Immigrant Community Leadership Initiative

[http://www.lsmnj.org/ProgServ/ComOutrServ/ImmigRef/RefGiftGiv/Liberiancomm/body\\_liberiancomm.html](http://www.lsmnj.org/ProgServ/ComOutrServ/ImmigRef/RefGiftGiv/Liberiancomm/body_liberiancomm.html)

Friends of Liberia

<http://www.fol.org/>

Embassy of the Republic of Liberia, Washington DC

<http://www.liberiaemb.org/>

Ministry of Information, Republic of Liberia

<http://www.micat.gov.lr/>

### **4.4 Other documents on the Web**

Annotated Guide to Internet Resources on Liberia - <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/liberia.html>

INCORE guide to internet sources on conflict in Liberia -

<http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/cds/countries/liberia.html>

Law Library of Congress Country Studies - <http://www.loc.gov/law/guide/liberia.html>

Constitution of the Commonwealth of Liberia, 1839 -

<http://www.toptags.com/aama/docs/libcon.htm>

UNHCR Country of Origin Legal Information - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd>

Kamara, T. (2003) 'Liberia: Civil War and Regional Conflict' WRITENET Country Paper No. 17 - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd?search=coi&source=WRITENET>

Carver, R. (1994) 'Liberia: What Hope for Peace?' WRITENET Country Papers -

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd?search=coi&source=WRITENET>

Kamara, T. (1999) 'Liberia: Can Peace Be Consolidated?' WRITENET Paper No.13 -

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd?search=coi&source=WRITENET>

Crisp, J. (2001) 'The WHALE: Wisdom We Have Acquired from the Liberia Experience' EPAU Evaluation Report, UNHCR - <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.pdf?tbl=RESEARCH&id=3b30a9ee4&page=research>

#### **4.5 Non-electronic resources and bibliography**

Aning, E. (1999) 'Eliciting Compliance from Warlords: The ECOWAS Experience in Liberia, 1990–1997', *Review of African Political Economy*, 81:335–348.

Aning, E. (1996) 'Ghana, ECOWAS and the Liberian Crisis: An Analysis of Ghana's Role in Liberia', *Liberian Studies Journal*, 21(2):259–299.

Berkeley, B. (2001) 'The Rebel' and 'The Assistant Secretary' in *The Graves Are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe and Power in the Heart of Africa*, New York: Basic Books.

Boley, G. (1983) *Liberia: The Rise and Fall of the First Republic*, MacMillan, USA.

Clapham, C. (1982) 'The Politics of Failure: Clientelism, Political Instability and National Integration in Liberian and Sierra Leone', in Clapham, C. (ed.) *Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientelism in the Modern State*, London, Frances Printer.

Dick, S. and Boer, W. (2001) 'The Spirits are Angry: Liberia's Secret Cults in the Service of Civil War', *Books and Culture*, 7(1):26–27.

Ellis, S. (1995) 'Liberia 1989-1994, A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence', *African Affairs*, 94:165–197.

Ellis, S. (1999) *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, London, Hurst and Company.

Gifford, P. (1993) *Christianity and Politics in Doe's Liberia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Harris, D. (1999) 'From "Warlord" to "Democratic" President: How Charles Taylor Won the 1997 Liberian Elections', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37(3):431–455.

Horton, S. (1994) *Liberia's Underdevelopment In Spite of the Struggle: A Personal Analysis of the Underlying Reasons for Liberia's Underdevelopment*, London, University Press of America.

Huband, M. (1998) *The Liberian Civil War*, London, Frank Class.

Kaplan, R. (1994) 'The Coming Anarchy', *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Liebenow, J. G. (1969) *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege*, New York, Cornell University Press.

Outram, Q. (1997) ' "It's Terminal Either Way": An Analysis of Armed Conflict in Liberia, 1989–1996', *Review of African Political Economy*, 73:355–371.

- Reno, W. (1996) 'The Business of War in Liberia', *Current History*, 95:211–215.
- Reno, W. (1995) 'Reinvention of African Patrimonial State: Charles Taylor's Liberia', *Third World Quarterly*, 16(1):109–120.
- Richards, P. (1996) *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*, London, Villiers Publishing.
- Sanneh, L. (1999) 'American Colonisation and the Founding of Liberia', *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*, Harvard, Harvard University Press.
- Sawyer, A. (1992) *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenge*, California, Institute of Contemporary Studies Press.
- Scott, C. (1998) 'Liberia: A Nation Displaced,' in Cohen, R. and Deng, F. (eds) *The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced*, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Sesay, M. (1996a) 'Civil War and Collective Intervention in Liberia', *Review of African Political Economy*, 67:35–52.
- Sesay, M. (1996b) 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34(3):395–420.