

September 5, 2014

A map of Liberia is shown in light blue, centered on a white background. The map includes labels for neighboring countries: SIERRA LEONE to the west, GUINEA to the north, and CÔTE D'IVOIRE to the east. The Atlantic Ocean is labeled to the southwest. Within Liberia, the cities Monrovia (marked with a star), Greenville, and Harper are labeled. Overlaid on the map is the title text in a dark blue, serif font.

**LIBERIA: LINKS BETWEEN  
PEACEBUILDING, CONFLICT  
PREVENTION AND DURABLE  
SOLUTIONS TO  
DISPLACEMENT**

**By James Shah Shilue and  
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Project on Internal Displacement

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Front Cover Photograph: Centers for Disease Control, "Liberia"

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
ACRONYMS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT	3
Civil war: Round one	4
COLLAPSE OF THE EARLY PEACE EFFORTS AND EMERGENCE OF	
MULTIPLE PLAYERS	7
WAR-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT	10
HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY	13
PEACEBUILDING, HUMANITARIAN AND SECURITY ISSUES	14
NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND PEACEBUILDING	19
CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED AND CURRENT CONCERNS	21
REFERENCES	23

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Current challenges to durable peacebuilding in Liberia are anchored in the limited responses to the issues and concerns that have confronted those who were displaced as a result of the fourteen year civil conflict (1989-2003) that disrupted the judicial, political, economic and social systems of the country. Since Liberia's origin in 1847, political exclusion, economic marginalization, ethnic hostilities and intense disagreement over patterns of resource distribution have formed the basis of conflict in Liberia.<sup>1</sup>

The initial conflict, between Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) turned into a civil war with other armed groups motivated not primarily by ideological differences but by personal grievances and economic interests.<sup>2</sup> During the fourteen-year war, widespread killing of innocent people, abductions, torture, rape and other forms of human rights abuses and violations were committed by all armed factions, leading to mass population movements both inside and outside of the country.<sup>3</sup> Displacement was virtually universal as almost all Liberians, at one time or another, were forced to leave their homes. The massive internal displacement, with many Liberians fleeing to Monrovia, the country's capital, increased pressures on urban services and transformed the livelihoods of the population. Before the war, about 70 percent of Liberians were rural farmers.<sup>4</sup> By 2008, after the war, almost a third of the country's population lived in Monrovia.

In examining the relationship between displacement, conflict-resolution and peacebuilding in Liberia with a particular emphasis on the role of the military and police in supporting solutions to displacement, there is evidence that although the government of Liberia has made great efforts to set up and develop its internal security apparatus, the country would have relapsed into conflict without the significant external assistance to displaced people and the role played by the international community in helping to preserve peace.

Liberia has made significant progress on various fronts, especially infrastructure development and security issues; yet, current prospects for sustainable peace in Liberia remain weak. Almost all Liberian security forces were involved in the war and thus have faced difficulty in being seen as neutral or objective. Prior to the war, the justice system in Liberia was manipulated by powerful individuals who used these structures for their personal benefits. Broadly considered then, the prospects for stability and peacebuilding will require attention to improving the state of security in Liberian society and resolving displacement.

While most internally displaced persons (IDPs) still contemplate return, this solution is limited by their inability to secure livelihoods, shelter, food security and health services in their places of origin. These are gaps that need to be addressed. In the case of Monrovia, growing

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<sup>1</sup> Shelly Dick, "Country Guide: Liberia," *Forced Migration Online*, <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/liberia/fmo013.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Morten Boas, "Dead ringers? The logic of neopatrimonial rule," in *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 22, No. 1, 2001

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch Report, "Back to the brink: war crimes by Liberian government and rebels, a call for greater international attention to Liberia and the sub region," *Human Rights Watch*, vol. 14 No. 4, May 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Colin Scott, "Liberia: a nation displaced," in Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, ed, *The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced*, Brookings Institution Press, 1998, p.119. See also Ipshita Mondel, "Lost in one's own country: the challenges of internally displaced persons", *The Bruce Hall Academic Journal*, Vol. VII, 2011, p.50.

urbanization fueled by internal displacement has exerted pressure on fragile environments, limited resources and exacerbated health hazards. Instead of policies aimed at expulsion and exclusion which has recently been pursued by the government, the authorities should seek their positive inclusion into the urban fabric.<sup>5</sup> These slum communities have a potential for productivity and social contribution which has yet to be explored and realized.

The Liberian peace and reconstruction process followed the usual pattern of the UN's *modus operandi* since the end of the Cold War, which is largely characterized by a sequence of activities in the following order: peace agreement, deployment of peacekeepers, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program, security sector reform and, finally, elections. In Liberia, regular elections have been crucial for maintaining peace, but they have not addressed the issue of socio-economic development and popular participation in democratic governance.

In an attempt to fill important peace keeping gaps, a Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation was formulated in March 2013. The roadmap was to foster coherent institutions and systems; to support national healing and reconciliation; and to strengthen efforts towards sustainable peace.<sup>6</sup> However, despite this initiative, intra-communal cohesion and trust, both of which are important indicators of reconciliation, have yet to be achieved. Some communities remain fragmented and perceptions of entitlement and legitimacy are often distorted. Reform and conflict resolution mechanisms at the local and national levels do not adequately address inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-generational tensions over natural resource management and long-term, secure access to land. The long conflict in Liberia polarized communities that once co-existed as the major warring factions and their supporters divided along ethnic, religious and social lines.<sup>7</sup>

The role of the relief community in supporting the basic social needs and services of Liberians provided an essential safety net for most people; but the inability of the Liberian government to resume the responsibilities for social services once provided by the humanitarian community is a challenge that can hardly be met.

Almost ten years ago, the Liberian government decided to close the IDP camps and to begin a national process of reconstruction and reconciliation.<sup>8</sup> Rather than considering the particular needs of IDPs and returning refugees (many of whom undoubtedly became IDPs), the government decided to prioritize issues of youth employment and rural development. These are both issues which affect IDPs, but it is regrettable that the government and the international community did not prioritize consideration for the needs of the displaced. Without basic data on the numbers of displaced who found solutions or who remain in limbo, it is difficult to draw conclusions about their on-going needs or about the relationship between ending displacement

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<sup>5</sup> Ailey Keiser Huges, "Liberia: Using Land Policy to Improve Life for the Urban Poor," *Focus on Land in Africa Brief*, February 2013, <http://www.focusonland.com/silo/files/liberia-urban-poverty-brief-.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Debey Sayndee and Silke Pietsch, "Liberia: Between Reconciliation Commission and Roadmap- Steps Forward in a Halted Process?", Kofi Annan Institute of Conflict Transformation, Policy Brief No 1, June 2013, p. 4. [http://www.academia.edu/6380105/Liberia\\_between\\_Reconciliation\\_Commission\\_and\\_Roadmap\\_-\\_Steps\\_Forward\\_in\\_a\\_Halted\\_Process](http://www.academia.edu/6380105/Liberia_between_Reconciliation_Commission_and_Roadmap_-_Steps_Forward_in_a_Halted_Process).

<sup>7</sup> Debey Sayndee and Silke Pietsch, *op cit*.

<sup>8</sup> IDP camps were formally declared closed and UNHCR assistance discontinued in April 2006. See Neill Wright, et al, "Real time evaluation of UNHCR's IDP operations in Liberia", July 2007, p. 7. <http://www.unhcr.org/46a4ae082.pdf>.

and security. Given the number of competing problems (including the recent Ebola epidemic) and the scarcity of resources, the government has not made IDP issues a priority.

Fundamentally, the wars and displacement changed the economic basis of Liberia's existence. It is unlikely, for example, that IDPs who have lived in Monrovia and other cities for years will return to their rural communities, with implications both for the urban and rural areas.

There are several lessons to be drawn from the Liberian conflict. Mistakes made early in the process of response to displacement have had repercussions in subsequent years. The government and international agencies did not implement a registration procedure nor a process to ascertain the solutions that IDPs themselves wanted. The authorities assumed that all the IDPs were willing to return, an assumption that proved erroneous. The weak follow-up programs for IDPs and returning refugees, especially in cities, were a direct consequence.<sup>9</sup> Hence, there is concern that the lack of solutions for the displaced could threaten the country's fragile peace and security. Resolving displacement is also central to the government's development agenda.

Although Liberia recently celebrated ten years of relative peace, the postwar DDR programs left most of the youth without prospects for a better future. Liberian women, and in particular, rural women and displaced women living in the border areas, continue to experience various forms of human rights abuses, marginalization and exclusion. Incidences of violence incurred during 14 years of war have continued to manifest in continued widespread cases of rape, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. Under the circumstances, there is a critical need for policies by both government and non-governmental institutions to address some of the consequences of the country's massive and long-term displacement, particularly its impact on urbanization.

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<sup>9</sup> An inter-agency assessment in April-May 2006 found approximately 28,000 individuals still residing in former IDP camps, of whom just over 16,000 had received return packages but had either not departed or had done so but later returned to the camps. Ibid, p. 7.

## ACRONYMS

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<b>ACS</b>	American Colonization Society
<b>AFL</b>	Armed Forces of Liberia
<b>AfT</b>	Agenda for Transformation
<b>CPA</b>	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>ECOMOG</b>	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>INPFL</b>	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
<b>JMC</b>	Joint Monitoring Committee
<b>LDF</b>	Lofa Defense Force
<b>LNPF</b>	Liberian National Police Force
<b>LPC</b>	Liberia Peace Council
<b>LURD</b>	Liberians for Reconciliation and Democracy
<b>LWI</b>	Liberian Women Initiative
<b>MODEL</b>	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NPA</b>	National Patriotic Party
<b>NPFL</b>	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
<b>NPFL-CRC</b>	National Patriotic Front of Liberia-Central Revolutionary Council
<b>NTGL</b>	National Transitional Government of Liberia
<b>OAU</b>	Organization of African Unity
<b>OCHA</b>	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>PBF</b>	UN Peacebuilding Fund

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<b>PBC</b>	Liberia Peacebuilding Commission
<b>PRS</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy
<b>SMC</b>	Statement of Mutual Commitments
<b>RAE</b>	Romani, Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians
<b>SSR</b>	Security Sector Reform
<b>TRC</b>	Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission
<b>ULIMO</b>	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
<b>ULIMO-K</b>	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy–Kromah faction (ULIMO-K)
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNMIL</b>	United Nations Mission in Liberia
<b>UNOL</b>	UN Office on Liberia
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Program

# INTRODUCTION: A HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT

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Throughout its history, Liberia has been plagued by conflict, usurpation of power, class-based domination and ethnic hostilities, all of which culminated in a devastating 14 year civil war between 1989 and 2003. By the time this war was brought to an end in 2003, over 250,000 people of the country's three million people had died. Abductions, torture, rape and other human rights abuses had been committed on a massive scale. Estimates were that at least one child in ten had been abducted and forced into service as a child soldier or sex slave. The country's infrastructure had been destroyed. There were no electrical grids, public running water facilities, sewage systems or other utilities.<sup>10</sup> Mass population movements had taken place both inside and outside of the country. Indeed, displacement was virtually universal as almost all Liberians, at one time or another, were forced to leave their homes.<sup>11</sup> The massive internal displacement, with many Liberians fleeing to Monrovia, the country's capital, increased pressures on urban services and transformed the livelihoods of the population. Whereas before the war, 75 percent of the population gained their livelihoods through agriculture,<sup>12</sup> in 2008 – five years after the peace agreement – almost a third of the country's population lived in Monrovia. The conflict disrupted the traditional tribal organization that existed in the Liberian countryside before the war.

This study examines the relationship between displacement, conflict-resolution and peacebuilding in Liberia with a particular emphasis on the role of the military and police in supporting solutions to displacement. The history of Liberia's conflict is a complex and at times convoluted one, characterized by a multiplicity of armed actors and the intervention of various subregional and international forces. Before entering into this history, three points about the nature of the conflict and humanitarian action need to be emphasized:

1. The war in Liberia lasted for 14 years. While the conflict is typically divided into two phases (1989-1997 and 1999-2003), in reality it consisted of several independent uprisings under various regional leaders and warlords. Successive phases of conflict and peacemaking cycled one after another until the conflict was finally brought to an end in 2003.
2. While Liberian displacement was massive, following the peace agreement of 2003, the government of Liberia and collaborating international organizations structured their humanitarian and reintegration programs according to 'categories' (e.g. refugees, internally displaced persons, and recruited militias) only briefly. In 2005 the government of Liberia closed the IDP camps and adopted a policy that rather than developing programs specifically for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returning refugees, the needs of these groups would be met through broader strategies, such as those which came

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<sup>10</sup>John Blaney, et al, "Wider Lessons for Peacebuilding: Security Sector Reform in Liberia," *Policy Analysis Brief*, Stanley Foundation, June 2010. <http://www.stanleyfoundation.org/publications/pab/LiberiaPAB610.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> According to Shelly Deck, "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." See Ibid, Forced Migration Online Country Guide: Liberia, p. 11.

[http://www.lpdf.net/preview/WnV\\_I8y\\_76Xp\\_lxDAYRXXwPk7yK1zrPe2ugHxJvYLXk,/FMO-Country-Guide-Liberia-1-Overview-Forced-migration.html?query=CONSTITUTION-OF-THE-REPUBLIC-OF-LIBERIA](http://www.lpdf.net/preview/WnV_I8y_76Xp_lxDAYRXXwPk7yK1zrPe2ugHxJvYLXk,/FMO-Country-Guide-Liberia-1-Overview-Forced-migration.html?query=CONSTITUTION-OF-THE-REPUBLIC-OF-LIBERIA).

<sup>12</sup> Colin Scott, op cit, p. 116.

to be known as Agenda for Transformation (AfT) and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).<sup>13</sup>

3. Displacement was the result of the conflict but it also contributed to the war. IDPs were often not protected and were susceptible to forced recruitment by militias. Refugees in neighboring countries were similarly pressured to join various rebel groups, who at one time or another, led incursions into Liberia. Liberia has 16 distinct ethnic groups and much of the conflict and resulting displacement was shaped by these ethnic divisions.

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<sup>13</sup>The PRS was a government development plan (June 2008-December 2011) structured and organized into four pillars: 1) Consolidating Peace and Security, 2) Revitalizing the Economy, 3) Strengthening Governance and the Rule of Law, and 4) Rehabilitating Infrastructure and Delivering Basic Services. Besides these main pillars, there are also quasi-pillars for cross-cutting issues, particularly, capacity building and gender equality. "Poverty Reduction Strategy," Republic of Liberia, 2005, <http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/Final%20PRS.pdf>. Also referred to as "Liberia Rising 2030," the AfT is the Government of Liberia's development strategy, following the PRS, to alleviate poverty and promote prosperity by transforming the Liberian economy. "Agenda for Transformation: Liberia's Medium Term Economic Growth and Development Strategy (2012-2017)," Republic of Liberia, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, 2011, [http://cdcliberia.org/The\\_Agenda\\_for\\_Transformation\\_AfT.pdf](http://cdcliberia.org/The_Agenda_for_Transformation_AfT.pdf).

## BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

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Liberia as a political entity dates to the first half of the nineteenth century when several thousand freed slaves from North America settled in Liberia with the support of a white American non-governmental church-based organization, the America Colonization Society (ACS).<sup>14</sup> Although these free slaves, known as Americo-Liberians, constituted less than 5 percent of the population of what was to become Liberia, they established a ruling oligarchy in 1847 that marginalized and oppressed the tribally-organized indigenous inhabitants. For the next 133 years, a succession of corrupt Americo-Liberian governments ruled the country, permitting foreign interests to gain control over most of Liberia's natural resources to the detriment of the impoverished indigenous population. This period of Americo-Liberian domination gave rise to deep-seated resentment and division within Liberian society, spurring deep structural cleavages, social divisions, marginalization and majority exclusion that are largely at the root of the brutal civil war that finally tore apart the Liberian state.

The event that ultimately triggered the conflict was a series of attempted state reforms introduced by the last Americo-Liberian president, William Tolbert (1971-1980). Tolbert's efforts to institute change were undermined by a concurrent loss of state revenue from longstanding mineral and agricultural exports, and the consequent economic decline Liberia experienced in the 1970s. Only exacerbating the situation, international aid to Liberia fell significantly from \$80 million in 1975 to \$44 million in 1976, while inflation rose to 11.4 percent the same year. When the Tolbert administration raised local rice prices in 1979, riots ensued, and the government ordered a violent crackdown which resulted in casualties and arrests.<sup>15</sup>

This episode marked the beginning of the end of the hegemonic Americo-Liberian rule that had been in place since 1847, and the onset of a cycle of political violence. In 1980, a group of non-commissioned military officers under the leadership of Master Sergeant Samuel Doe revolted and overthrew Tolbert. Doe, a member of the small Krahn tribe who won initial support due to his populist policies, suspended the constitution and formed the People's Redemption Council, which claimed full presidential executive powers.<sup>16</sup> His "ten-year rule was characterized by rampant corruption in government, gross inefficiency in managing the economy, the brutal repression of political opponents and favoritism towards the Krahn."<sup>17</sup> The situation only worsened when in 1985 an unsuccessful military coup attempt sparked brutal reprisals by the Krahn against the Gio and Mano ethnic groups.

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<sup>14</sup>J.T. Sabin, "The Making of the Americo-Liberian Community: A Study of Politics and Society in Nineteenth-Century Liberia," Ph.D. thesis Columbia University, 1974.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. 18

<sup>16</sup>"Liberia: How Sustainable is the Recovery?," *International Crisis Group*, August 2011, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/west-africa/liberia/177%20Liberia%20-%20How%20Sustainable%20is%20the%20Recovery.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup>Insight on Conflict, *Liberia: Conflict Profile*. [www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/liberia/conflict-profile/](http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/liberia/conflict-profile/).

## *Civil War: Round One*

On December 24, 1989, Charles Taylor, a former Director for General Services Agency in the Doe government, launched a surprise attack on Liberia supported by the Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Libya.<sup>18</sup> Taylor had previously been jailed in the United States after being accused of embezzling funds in Liberia, yet had mysteriously managed to escape in September 1985. He had gone to the Ivory Coast and raised an army, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), with the intention of overthrowing the regime of Samuel Doe. The Doe government was indeed overthrown but the conflict proved to be a long and bloody one, resulting in the deaths and displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians. Within weeks of Taylor's invasion, over 160,000 Liberians fled into neighboring Guinea and Ivory Coast – "beginning a refugee exodus from Liberia that escalated to over 700,000 – one-third of the population – by late 1990."<sup>19</sup> The initial conflict, between Taylor's NPFL and Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) turned into a civil war with various other armed groups who were motivated not primarily by ideological differences but by personal grievances and economic interests.<sup>20</sup>

In August of 1990, concerned by the war's devastating effect on Liberia's civilian population, and the lack of international engagement, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) dispatched peacekeeping forces through the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to quell the violence.<sup>21</sup> The United Nations did not address the Liberian crisis in political terms until November 1992, considering Liberia a regional problem best dealt with by ECOWAS.<sup>22</sup> This was also a period when the US and European powers were focused on the repercussions of the end of the Cold War and devoted little attention to supporting political solutions to the Liberian conflict and were happy to support the ECOWAS peace plan. This plan called for: an immediate ceasefire, the establishment and deployment of an ECOWAS ceasefire monitoring group (ECOMOG), the establishment of an interim government that would exclude Doe and Taylor, and the holding of free and fair elections within a year.<sup>23</sup>

But the peace plan was to have little effect on the conflict in Liberia and ECOMOG was unable to enforce a ceasefire. From 1990 to 1992, Liberia was divided into two zones with Taylor controlling close to 90 percent of the country in what was called 'Greater Liberia' while an Interim Government of National Unity, headed by Dr. Amos Sawyer, was established in Monrovia with the support of ECOMOG. The November 1990 ceasefire lasted only briefly and ended abruptly when Taylor attacked Monrovia in October 1992 in a second attempt to gain political and economic control by force. In response to Taylor's aggression, a new armed force called the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) was established by

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<sup>18</sup>"Charles Taylor: Preacher, Warlord, President," BBC News Africa, September 26, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12392062>.

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Waging War to Keep the Peace: The ECOMOG Intervention and Human Rights*, June 1993, vol. 5, no. 6 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/liberia/>.

<sup>20</sup>Insight on Conflict, op cit.

<sup>21</sup> "ECOWAS and the Subregional Peacekeeping in Liberia," *the Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 25 September 1995, <http://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/66>.

<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Waging War to Keep the Peace: The ECOMOG Intervention and Human Rights*, June 1993, vol. 5, no. 6 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1993/liberia/>.

<sup>23</sup> Rasheed Draman and David Carment, "Managing Chaos in the West African Sub-Region: Assessing the Role of ECOMOG in Liberia," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, fall 2003, pp. 7-8. <http://http-server.carleton.ca/~dcarment/papers/ECOMOG.pdf>.

Krahn and Mandingo<sup>24</sup> refugees based in Sierra Leone, supported by both Sierra Leone and ECOMOG. Taylor's breach of the ceasefire precipitated a counter attack on NPFL territory by ECOMOG with ULIMO and a re-armed AFL.

ECOMOG was the first subregional military force to be used in the global South after the Cold War and later was the first subregional military force with which the UN agreed to work as a secondary power. But ECOMOG's intervention was plagued with difficulties. Its mandate was ambiguous; it was charged with both mediating between the warring factions and neutralizing them through forcible disarmament if necessary. It had peace enforcement as well as peacekeeping objectives and with the breakdown of the ceasefire, there was no peace to keep. ECOMOG decided to work with two contending factions against Charles Taylor which meant ECOMOG was perceived not as a neutral force, but rather as a party to the conflict.<sup>25</sup> Regional dynamics played a role in ECOMOG. With most troops contributed by Nigeria, the dominant power in the subregion, it was opposed by the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. There were allegations that ECOMOG was tied to financial interests in the Doe government. There were also resource constraints. While ECOMOG had a maximum of 12,500 troops, sometimes the number was as low as 2,700 which was much too small for peace enforcement or even for effective peacekeeping. Junior officers often did not receive pay for several months which led them to resort to the black market and crimes committed by ECOMOG soldiers drained resources while alienating many Liberians that they had been intended to protect.<sup>26</sup>

ECOMOG's intervention has come under serious criticism. As one expert states, "ECOMOG's efforts largely failed. It entered a contested situation with inadequate resources. It did not enjoy wide political support; it lacked detailed knowledge of Liberia and the conflict; its military capabilities and mandate were ineffective; and its commitment to remain had some destabilizing effects, notably the aiding of surrogate forces. Furthermore ECOMOG's participation appeared to have prolonged the conflict."<sup>27</sup>

Others, while recognizing the shortcomings of ECOMOG, note that ECOWAS took this initiative to respond to a devastating war which showed signs of spilling over into neighboring countries (and eventually did so in the case of Sierra Leone). ECOWAS had envisioned that ECOMOG would be a "short, surgical police action," but by the time ECOMOG arrived, Taylor forces controlled 90 percent of Liberia's territory and there was no ceasefire for it to monitor. Draman and Carment consider that "ECOMOG's offensive in Liberia succeeded in containing the conflict, at least for a short period, preventing the situation from degenerating into genocidal proportions like the type of all-out slaughter witnessed between April and July 1994 in Rwanda."<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding the previous lack of US interest in Liberian affairs, at the onset of the conflict, the United States provided by far the most funding of all outside countries to Liberia, sending approximately US \$75 million in military assistance to ECOMOG contingents from individual

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<sup>24</sup> The Krahn are a small tribe which Samuel Doe and most of his powerful government officials came from. The Mandingos are largely Muslim Liberians.

<sup>25</sup> Rashid Draman and David Carmen, *op cit.* pp. 15-16.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert Howe, "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping," *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996-97) pp. 168-169. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2539276.pdf?acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true>

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p.17.

countries.<sup>29</sup> That the United States did not have full confidence in ECOMOG's professionalism, however, was made apparent by occasional delays in the delivery of logistical equipment and the withholding of some intelligence information.<sup>30</sup>

On the humanitarian front, "[a]lthough ECOMOG never had explicit humanitarian objectives, it did reduce hostilities and atrocities, and by establishing order in greater Monrovia, it set up a safe haven for thousands of displaced Liberians. By securing the port and airport, it also assisted relief operations. In this phase, ECOMOG functioned as a police force within its security zone and a defense force against the NPFL."<sup>31</sup>

From 1992-1996, ECOMOG collaborated with the UN but this was a period marked by successive temporary peace accords which were repeatedly broken. The fact that ECOMOG played a peace enforcement role had a negative impact on humanitarian relief. In 1992 and 1993 it carried out air attacks on NPFL territory, hitting civilian, medical and aid installations. In an effort to isolate the NPFL, it imposed and enforced a ban on importing relief supplies from the Ivory Coast. Further splintering of armed factions along ethnic and linguistic lines during this time further complicated humanitarian operations.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Klass Van Walraven, "The Netherlands and Liberia: Dutch Policies and Interventions with respect to the Liberian Civil War," Conflict Policy Research Project, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael,' November 1999.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Colin Scott, op cit, p. 105.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.109.



## COLLAPSE OF THE EARLY PEACE EFFORTS AND EMERGENCE OF MULTIPLE PLAYERS

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ECOWAS initiatives in 1990 that aimed to achieve a lasting ceasefire, restore law and order, and support a unity government produced disappointing results. The first serious peace effort, the Cotonou Agreement of July 1993, was supervised by ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia. On July 25, 1993, the warring parties agreed to establish a Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, comprised of representatives from the Liberian fighting forces, ECOMOG and the United Nations. On August 1, 1993, an additional 4,000 ECOMOG troops from countries belonging to the Organization of African Unity arrived, as well as the main body of a United Nations observer contingent. All parties agreed to form a single Liberian National Transitional Government and to hold elections.

Although the agreement had been negotiated seriously, it did little to end the fighting. To the contrary, it set a precedent for direct factional involvement in the Liberian central government by allocating various government positions to each group. The agreement was, in reality, an appeasement strategy aiming to halt the fighting rather than to address its underlying causes. This became the framework for subsequent agreements, marking the beginning of a ‘power for guns’ policy, whereby factional leaders would sign agreements because these granted them increasing amounts of power in the transitional government and allowed them to bring their combatants into the capital.<sup>33</sup>

Ending the fighting and achieving peace proved an immensely complicated task due to the emergence of multiple armed actors constantly changing sides and, in many cases, supported by other countries in the region—each with its own agenda. At the outset of the war, one of Taylor’s fiercest commanders, General Prince Y. Johnson, split apart from the NPFL and formed a surrogate faction called the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia. Three other splinter groups soon emerged – the National Patriotic Front of Liberia-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC), the Armed Forces of Liberia, composed of remnants of Doe’s original force, and the Lofa Defense Force. The abovementioned ULIMO, founded by prominent Krahn and Mandingo politicians, split into two distinct forces in 1994 mainly along ethnic lines. And there were many other smaller armed groups which were active in various parts of the country.

After heavy fighting in Monrovia and with the intervention of ECOMOG, the Abuja Agreement of August 1995 was signed in which the contending parties agreed to hold democratic elections in Liberia in July 1997. Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Party (NPA) won the 1997 elections with 75 percent of the vote.<sup>34</sup> But peace had not yet been achieved. The 1995 Abuja Agreement called for full power-sharing with representation of all warring parties, allowing each to stand for election, yet fighting soon broke out among the various factions over appointments to various government positions. A high level of corruption became endemic throughout the country.

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<sup>33</sup> Kendra Dupuy and Julian Detzel, "Appeasing the Warlords: Power-sharing agreements in Liberia," *PRIO and Centre for the study of Civil War*, 2008, [http://file.prio.no/Publication\\_files/Prio/Liberia%20Policy%20Brief.pdf](http://file.prio.no/Publication_files/Prio/Liberia%20Policy%20Brief.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Insight on Conflict, op cit.



The transitional processes and peace building efforts that were instituted after the first phase of civil war had failed dismally.<sup>35</sup> Taylor's government faced a military challenge from Liberians for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) a rebel group which began by operating out of Guinea and by 1997 the country was again mired in widespread conflict.

In early 2003, a second rebel group called the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, (MODEL), began fighting in the south. By the middle of the year, less than one-third of the country was controlled by Taylor's forces. The arrival of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) peacekeepers in August 2003 was soon followed by Taylor's resignation. Taylor initially fled to Nigeria and then to Cameroon but was eventually extradited to Sierra Leone where he was sentenced to 50 years of prison for his role in the conflict in Sierra Leone.<sup>36</sup> On August 18 2003, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Accra, Ghana. Eventually, ECOMOL troops began implementing the CPA, which brought in UN peacekeepers to stabilize and undertake recovery processes in Liberia.<sup>37</sup>

Regarding the eventual end to the Liberian civil conflict, enormous credit is due to the organized actions of Liberian women. The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, immortalized in the film "Pray the Devil Back to Hell,"<sup>38</sup> provides a classic account of the peace movement started by Liberian women in 2003.<sup>39</sup> After the signing of the CPA, the women of Liberia continued their peace building efforts under the auspices of the Liberian Women Initiative, by engaging in a number of targeted activities assisting with disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, and with the electoral process. As an earlier Brookings Institution study emphasized, women's groups not only made a particular and sustained commitment to peace processes, but also were among the few civil society groups raising the concerns of displaced populations.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>George Klay Kieh, Jr., "The Roots of the Second Liberian Civil War," in *International Journal on World Peace*, Vol. 26 Issue 1, p. 7, March 2009.

<sup>36</sup>International Crisis Group, *Liberia: Security Challenges*, November 3, 2003, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/liberia/071-liberia-security-challenges.aspx>.

<sup>37</sup>United States Institute of Peace, *Peace Agreements Digital Collection*, August 18, 2003, [http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace\\_agreements/liberia\\_08182003.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/liberia_08182003.pdf).

<sup>38</sup>"October 18: Pray the Devil Back to Hell," Women, War and Peace, PBS, October 11, 2011, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/full-episodes/pray-the-devil-back-to-hell/>.

<sup>39</sup>Lisa Schirch and Manjika Sewak, "The Role of Women in Peacebuilding," *Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict*, January 2005.

<sup>40</sup>Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Displacement in Peace Processes, Peace Agreements and Peacebuilding*, September 2007,

[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2007/9/peaceprocesses/2007\\_peaceprocesses.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2007/9/peaceprocesses/2007_peaceprocesses.pdf).

The following table highlights the different warring parties in the Liberian conflict alongside their leaders and ethnic affiliations.

<b>Militia Group</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Ethnic Affiliations</b>
<b>National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)</b>	Charles Taylor	Americo-Liberian and Gio/Mano
<b>Independent National Patriotic Force of Liberia</b>	Prince Johnson	Gio
<b>United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO)</b>	Alhaji G. V. Kromah	Initially Mandingo and Krahn, later split into ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J factions
<b>Liberia Peace Council (LPC)</b>	George Boley	Krahn
<b>Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)</b>	Sekou D. Konneh	Mandingo
<b>Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)</b>	Thomas Nimely	Krahn
<b>Lofa Defense Force</b>	Francois Massaquoi	Loma

Although the Liberian civil war began as a classic attempt by one rebel movement to overthrow the state, it evolved into a competition among many armed groups for territorial control and economic gain (see table above). All Liberian factions engaged in plundering, and entrenched themselves territorially in order to gain political and economic power through military means.<sup>41</sup> Amidst unbridled plundering, warring factions did not abide by the various peace agreements they had accepted. Moreover, none of the factions articulated any clear ideological reasons for waging the war, nor did any offer a strategy to tackle Liberia's political, economic, and social challenges or relieve the suffering of the civilian population. Although anti-NPFL factions claimed to be fighting for the restoration of democracy in Liberia, they were essentially, as Adebajo argued, ad hoc ethnic armies at the whims and caprices of selfish individuals with dubious credentials.<sup>42</sup> All factions alike committed human rights violations and their combined activities led to mass population displacement across the country.

<sup>41</sup>Philippa Atkinson, "The War Economy in Liberia: a political analysis," in *Relief and Rehabilitation Network*, May 1997.

<sup>42</sup>Adekeye Adebajo, "The Curse of Berlin: Africa's Security Dilemmas," Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2005. [http://www.fes.de/ipg/IPG4\\_2005/07\\_ADEBAJO.PDF](http://www.fes.de/ipg/IPG4_2005/07_ADEBAJO.PDF).

# WAR-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

During the Liberian civil war, violence and brutality were systematically used to create terror as a means of controlling populations in particular regions. The majority of the displaced have been impoverished, dispossessed, oppressed or war victims, having little or no income, employment or survival opportunities in the areas where they sought refuge. Villages and IDP camps in Lofa and Bong counties were emptied and reportedly looted by both government and dissident forces, forcing many civilians to seek refuge in camps around Monrovia.<sup>43</sup> Insurgent attacks on the southwestern Atlantic Port of Robertsport, Grand Gedeh County, as well as on the strategic southern port town of Harper, forced thousands of dispossessed civilians to flee.<sup>44</sup> In 2003, heavy fighting in border areas with neighboring Côte d'Ivoire caused the displacement of thousands of families.<sup>45</sup>



Map: UNHCR, December 2005

<sup>43</sup>Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Profile of Internal Displacement: Liberia*, November 5, 2002, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Africa/Liberia/pdf/Liberia+-November+2002.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup>"Hundreds flee Liberian port city as rebel gain access to the sea," Agence France-Press, February 14, 2003, <http://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/hundreds-flee-liberian-port-city-rebels-gain-access-sea>.

<sup>45</sup>Amnesty International, *No escape: Liberian refugees in Cote d'Ivoire*, Amnesty International, June 24, 2003, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/45bb7e1d2.pdf>.

Furthermore, the ceaseless cycle of assaults and counter assaults caused severe displacement among farming communities in rural Liberia, and furthered urbanization. Although over 80 percent of all uprooted Liberians returned home when the civil war appeared to have ended and Taylor was elected into office in 1997, Taylor's rule led to renewed conflict beginning in 1999, resulting in further displacement.

Two patterns of displacement prevailed. People associated with or protected by one of the warring factions took refuge from the fighting in locations within their own regions, often in towns and cities. Others fleeing from the same warring factions were far more likely to go to Monrovia, where humanitarian assistance was believed to be available. At the time of the Accra Agreement, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had set up camps for some 500,000 to 600,000 IDPs in several population hubs across Liberia. In May 2003, the UN reported that there were over 200,000 IDPs in Liberia, spread across 19 camps 60 percent of which were in Monrovia.<sup>46</sup> Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies provided protection, relief and basic services for IDPs living in these camps.<sup>47</sup> However, those IDPs who were not in camps, but sought shelter in public buildings, empty dwellings, sports fields and schools were much more vulnerable. Thousands more IDPs sought safety by living with families in places less affected by the conflict.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected President of Liberia in 2005 and, at her request, UNHCR formally closed the camps it had managed. The closing of the camps signified that the formal program of protection, relief, and services for IDPs was over; no longer could IDPs claim to constitute a formal category that warranted assistance and/or protection from evictions. In closing the camps, the government's intention, shared by UNHCR and other assistance agencies, was that IDPs would leave the precarious lives they had resorted to in the cities – especially in Monrovia – and return to their presumably peaceful villages of origin. IDPs, like refugees, received return packages and assistance delivered to their original communities. However, the closure of IDP camps was controversial within the UN and among NGOs. All parties were well aware that few communities would be prepared to absorb such large numbers of returnees, especially considering their inability to support those residents who had never left. Moreover, a large proportion of IDPs no longer had families to which they could return or land or resources necessary for survival.<sup>48</sup> In spite of the government's desire to 'close the IDP file,' in essence, a large number of IDPs remained without solutions. Many IDPs negotiated with the landlords of land that had previously belonged to IDP camps so that they might stay for some amount of time and pay rent. Many others continued to squat on state-owned or private land until they were evicted, while still others returned to their villages in order to take advantage of assistance packages available to returnees. IDPs who went back to their villages sometimes returned to the camps when assistance ran out.<sup>49</sup>

Once the IDP camps were closed, those who had fled to Monrovia during the conflict were no longer considered to be IDPs, but rather part of the larger community of urban poor. While the

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<sup>46</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Profile of Internal displacement in Liberia*, op cit.

<sup>47</sup> Liberia was one of the first countries using the "cluster approach," through which UN agencies and NGOs are assigned leading roles in specific sectors of humanitarian action.

<sup>48</sup> Both UNHCR and the government were well aware of the absolute poverty and widespread physical devastation in the country side but considered the future prospects better there in the long run than in Monrovia.

<sup>49</sup> Jesuit Refugee Service, *Six Months After the Official Closure of the IDP Camps. Assessment of the IDP Return Process in Liberia*" 2006, p. 16-18. <http://www.alnap.org/resource/11244>.

continuing migration to Monrovia is now largely driven by economic factors rather than conflict, the urban growth experienced by Monrovia and other Liberian is a direct consequence of the war. Monrovia's population in particular increased dramatically during the conflict. By early 1995, Monrovia's population stood at 1.3 million, triple what it had been in 1986.<sup>50</sup> While more recent IDPs have sought shelter and managed to integrate in various communities around Monrovia, most of the earlier IDPs were absorbed in slum communities in the city center.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to note that in counting IDPs and calculating assistance packages, UNHCR, at the request of the government, did not include the thousands of Liberians who were internally displaced outside of the camps. These constituted a large and underserved population. Rather, the number of IDPs was based on those who had registered with the World Food Program for food assistance in camps and return assistance was only provided to those returning from camps.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to those who were displaced within the country, between 500,000 and 700,000 Liberians are estimated to have crossed into other countries in the West African region as refugees, though they were not always registered as such. Between 2004 and 2007 UNHCR repatriated 160,000 refugees from Ivory Coast, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ghana, and has continued to repatriate individual refugees from these countries ever since.<sup>53</sup> As is often the case, there were many more Liberian refugees who returned spontaneously than those who participated in the organized repatriations. In the case of refugee returns, UNHCR not only provided return packages to returnees— as they had done for the IDP population – but also invested significant resources in community revitalization to receive the returnees and give an economic push. This strategy, by and large, produced disappointing results. Rural Liberia was not yet ready to respond to such development incentives.

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<sup>50</sup> For more on this, see: <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Africa/Liberia.html#ixzz36cqDcsAF>.

<sup>51</sup> Patricia Fagen, *Uprooted and Unrestored: A Comparative Review of Durable Solutions for People Displaced by Conflict in Colombia and Liberia*, UNHCR, PDES 2011/09, August 2011. <http://www.unhcr.org/4e576a739.html>

<sup>52</sup> Neill Wright et al., op cit.

<sup>53</sup> Patricia Fagen, op cit.



## HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

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At the onset of the Liberian war in 1989, the international humanitarian community began to establish a major presence in Liberia and became an important institutional player, channeling substantial amounts of relief aid, the majority from the United States and Europe. Because of the scarcity of food, the bulk of resources during the conflict was focused on food aid, distributed through the World Food Program and Catholic Relief Services, with about a quarter of the value accounted for by small-scale health and social welfare programs implemented by NGOs. Emergency aid on a massive scale, through NGOs and the UN, amounted to at least \$500 million USD during the war.<sup>54</sup> Modest infrastructure development also formed part of the early donor agenda for Liberia.<sup>55</sup>

Since 2003, the international community has poured billions of dollars of aid into Liberia. In 2011 alone, Liberia received \$765 million USD in official development assistance – some 73 percent of its gross national income – and the UN spends \$500 million per year on its peacekeeping mission which still consists of 7,500 troops a decade after the peace agreement.<sup>56</sup>

When peace finally came to Liberia, the government faced challenges on all fronts, including the task of integrating returning refugees and IDPs as well as former combatants. However, the government's position was that the displaced were not to be treated as a separate category from other poor and war-affected people; rather the displaced, like all Liberians, would benefit from the government's priorities of economic viability and youth employment.<sup>57</sup> As Patricia Fagen has argued, while this is a valid approach, it runs the risk of not addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of specific groups, such as the displaced.<sup>58</sup> The fact that only short term assistance was channeled specifically to support return of refugees and IDPs as well as to the demobilized – rather than the long-term assistance needed to support durable solutions has arguably exacerbated the isolation of these large groups of people.

Moreover, a large portion of international assistance available for all the vulnerable sectors has been channeled to support the revitalization of communities of origin and the revival of agricultural productivity in depopulated and damaged rural areas. While these are important goals for the future development of the country evident in the government development plans, given the extreme devastation of these communities and of agricultural productivity generally, the results of attempts to reintegrate war-affected populations into rural Liberia have been decidedly mixed, and in many instances have failed.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Herbert Howe, op cit, pp. 145-176.

<sup>55</sup>Fabrice Weissman, "Derriere le chaos, crises et interventions internationales," *Relations internationales et Strategiques*, 1996.

<sup>56</sup> Brian Glencorse, *A decade of dependence in Liberia*, August 2013, Devex, <https://www.devex.com/news/a-decade-of-aid-dependence-in-liberia-81634>

<sup>57</sup>Patricia Fagen, op cit, p. 42.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Lynn Yoshikawa, "Liberia: Out of the Ashes", InterAction Policy Paper, May 2012.

<http://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/InterAction%20Transition%20Case%20Study%20-%20Liberia%20-%20May%202012.pdf>.

## PEACEBUILDING, HUMANITARIAN AND SECURITY ISSUES

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The Accra Peace Agreement of August 18, 2003 created a framework for a two year National Transition Government (NTG) in Liberia. Liberian businessman, Charles G. Bryant was selected by the various factions to steer the transition. The NTG replaced the government under the 1986 constitution and ruled until elections were held in 2005 which elected Ellen Sirleaf Johnson. In 2006 the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to promote peace, security and reconciliation.<sup>60</sup>

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established formally by the Security Council (Resolution 1509) in September 2003, replacing the previously established UN Office on Liberia (UNOL) and subsuming ECOMOG. ECOWAS in turn formed the Economic Community of West African States Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). UNMIL was authorized for two years, October 2003 to July 2005, and charged with assuming responsibility for security and the restoration of democracy in Liberia. Its force consisted of 15,000 military personnel and 1,115 police.<sup>61</sup> It was mandated:

- (a) to observe and monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and investigate violations of the ceasefire;
- (b) to establish and maintain continuous liaison with the field headquarters of all the parties' military forces;
- (c) to assist in the development of cantonment sites and to provide security at these sites;
- (d) to observe and monitor disengagement and cantonment of military forces of all the parties;
- (e) to support the work of the Joint Monitoring Committee.<sup>62</sup>

Since its establishment in 2003, UNMIL has been regularly re-authorized although its military component has been reduced. It remains one of the largest peacekeeping missions in the world.

Like many countries ravaged by war, Liberia experienced challenges with developing and maintaining effective security and justice systems. Almost all Liberian security forces were involved in the war and thus have faced difficulty in being seen as neutral or objective. Prior to the war, the justice system in Liberia was manipulated by powerful individuals who used these structures with impunity to maintain and legitimize their power.<sup>63</sup> The prospects for stability and peacebuilding are enhanced by the extent to which security sector reform is predicated on the

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<sup>60</sup> For discussion of the inclusion of displacement in truth-telling mechanisms, see Awa Dabo, "In the Presence of Absence: Truth-telling and Displacement in Liberia," 2012. International Centre on Transitional Justice and Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement.

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/idp/tj%20case%20studies/Dabo%20TruthTelling%20Liberia.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> United Nations Mission in Liberia, *UNMIL Facts and Figures*"

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmil/facts.shtml>.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations, S RES/1509. <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/525/70/PDF/N0352570.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>63</sup> Accord, "Accord Examines Liberia's Justice and Security Sector Reform," March 6, 2013,

<http://www.accord.org.za/news/87-knowledge-production/1073-accord-examines-liberia-s-justice-and-security-sector-reform>.

*state of security* broadly defined, as opposed to the narrower focus on the *security of the state*.<sup>64</sup> Immediately after the war in 2003, both the national government and international agencies concentrated and prioritized specific security-related activities, including the implementation of a disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration process targeting more than 100,000 ex-combatants, forming a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, instituting reforms in the security sector, re-establishing the rule of law and holding elections.

A program of de-mobilization, disarmament and reconstruction (DDR) was implemented as quickly as possible in order to prevent a return to the war. While there was widespread recognition of the need to establish rule of law in Liberia, this has to be based on the state's possession of a monopoly of force. Both DDR and security sector reform (SSR) are ways of consolidating the state's monopoly of force and in Liberia they were implemented concurrently. The idea was to keep former combatants focused on material gain through employment rather than on coup attempts or continued fighting. Many – but not all – of the demobilized combatants were transferred into a reconstituted military. Over 100,000 combatants were disarmed and demobilized.<sup>65</sup>

DDR and SSR are dangerous operations in that they are inherently political processes as they dismantle the de facto institutions of power in conflict-affected countries. And in Liberia the problem was severe as corrupt security forces had ravaged the population for years, giving rise to a widespread belief that new institutions were needed: police force, armed forces and judicial system. The UN took the lead in creating a civilian law enforcement capacity, judiciary, police force and corrections facilities while the US was largely responsible for demobilization and eventual reconstitution of the armed forces of Liberia and the Ministry of Defense.<sup>66</sup> As Blaney et al explain, security sector reform encompasses much more than 'training and equipping' forces.

“For instance, the SSR program that drove the reconstitution of the Armed Forces of Liberia and Ministry of National Defence involved recruiting, vetting, training, equipping, fielding, sustaining and mentoring the force. It also involved constructing bases across the country, establishing a professional ministry, drafting a national defense strategy, and designing a new force structure. Similarly, the program to restructure the Liberian National Police force involved purging unqualified policemen, extensive recruiting and training of new police forces, creating a police academy, and developing an emergency infrastructure, such as a national toll-free emergency number (e.g. the equivalent of dialing 911 in the United States).”<sup>67</sup>

Through the combined efforts of local and international stakeholders, Liberia was added to the UN Peacebuilding Commission agenda in 2010 – although the Secretary-General had approved Liberia as a beneficiary of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in 2007.<sup>68</sup> From this, Liberia qualified for funding to implement its Poverty Reduction Strategy, specifically Pillars 1 and 3 addressing gaps relating to the security and justice sectors respectively. Pillar 1's main objective

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<sup>64</sup>For more, see "The Challenges and Opportunities of Security Sector Reform", DCAF, 2004, <http://www.dcaf.ch/Publications/The-Challenges-and-Opportunities-of-Security-Sector-Reform-in-Post-Conflict-Liberia>.

<sup>65</sup> John Blaney, et al, op cit.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid p. 6.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.unpbf.org/countries/liberia/>.



was to ensure a secure and peaceful environment, both domestically and within the sub-region, which would be conducive to sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth and development. Pillar 3 also focused on fostering and strengthening partnerships with civil society as a means of building and operating effective institutions and systems. Beyond security sector reform, the latter pillars also provided opportunity for civil society involvement in peace consolidation.

One non-governmental organization that benefitted from the initial PBF was Interpeace, a Swiss based NGO focused on peacebuilding.<sup>69</sup> Through a local Liberian team, based on the organization's policy of local ownership, Interpeace successfully implemented a pilot community mobilization reconciliation project in Liberia's troubled Nimba County with the support of UN Peacebuilding Fund, the UN Mission in Liberia and the Ministry of Inter Affairs. Commenting on the positive impact of the pilot peace and reconciliation project, the UN Secretary-General in his report to the General Assembly said "pilot community reconciliation project in Liberia's volatile Nimba County succeeded in developing a model for conflict resolution, including mechanisms for settling property disputes." The success of this project in fostering reconciliation and post conflict reintegration led to the roll-out of a similar approach at the national level. Although not explicitly targeted at IDPs, many of these components – such as property dispute resolution – contributed to the ability of displaced persons to find solutions. Challenges to such approaches include political risks affecting the performance of reconciliation and governance projects: limited political will and national ownership, along with difficulties in national legislatures; and inflexible positions of some key stakeholders. Such challenges attest to the fact that sustainable peacebuilding is not a short term endeavor.<sup>70</sup>

As in the case of the PRS, the genesis of the Justice and Security Joint Program rests squarely within the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan and Peacebuilding Commission Priority Plan and is aligned with the Government of Liberia's PRS and the AFT. The concept of the Regional Hubs is one of the reform strategies, which is aimed at improving access to justice and security services through decentralization, enhanced productivity through the training and strengthening of justice and security institutions and providing back office support to improve communication and efficiency, while promoting the co-location of security agencies to encourage coordination, information and resource sharing.

While the concept of the Security Hub, commonly referred to "Gbanga Regional Hub," is encouraging, the manner in which the plan was conceived and carried out has drawn waves of criticism from local and national stakeholders. For example, the land on which the pilot hub is constructed was initially obtained without proper arrangements with local landlords. Community residents were not adequately consulted before the 'Security Hub' was built in their county. Because of the role various factions played in the execution of the war and the atrocities committed against unarmed civilians, anything that looks like military barracks invokes the ugly memories of the war. Civil society groups accused the Liberian government of using the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund to foment crisis by taking away community land without going through the appropriate channels. Because of the barrage of criticisms and resentment by non-state actors, the government later renegotiated with key community stakeholders and finally obtained legitimate deeds for the property.

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<sup>69</sup>'The Nimba Pilot,' Interpeace, <http://www.interpeace.org/programmes/liberia/the-nimba-pilot>.

<sup>70</sup>United Nations General Assembly, sixty fourth session, *Third Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund*, 3 August, 2009, p. 13. See <http://betterpeace.org/node/973>.

The Liberian peace and reconstruction process follows the usual pattern of the UN's modus operandi since the end of the Cold War, which is largely characterized by a sequence of activities in the following order: peace agreement, deployment of peacekeepers, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program, security sector reform, and, finally, elections. Despite accusations of corruption, the National Transitional Government of Liberia accomplished its main mission. The presence of UNMIL troops around the country facilitated the return of some IDPs in November 2004 to their counties of origin, mainly Lofa, Gbarpolu and Bomi Counties. UNMIL and the Interim Government made possible resettlement and reintegration of many former combatants and refugees, and the holding of elections. UNMIL had been involved with IDPs by working with UNHCR and the camp managers to ensure that assistance and facilities in the newly-created IDP camps were better than those in the ad hoc structures the IDPs had established in relocating from rural Liberia. For example, UNHCR persuaded UNMIL to extend its security patrols to the camps so that IDPs and their host communities could feel safe and confident in rebuilding their lives. Also, UNHCR provided transport and its staff helped to receive, register and distribute relief items to the new arrivals at the IDP camps. They also provided protection and assistance when needed. UNMIL's subsequent deployment around Liberia helped to allay fears and bolstered security outside Monrovia which facilitated the relocation of some IDPs to their countries of origin.

Nevertheless, despite serious efforts on the part of the UN, donors and the Liberia government, the objectives of the DDR process were largely unmet.<sup>71</sup> In the immediate post-conflict Liberia, military equipment was widely available, former combatants frequently re-connected with their former commanders for purposes of criminal activity or illegal employment and the capacity training provided fell short of enabling widespread reintegration. Part of the problem resided in that the government and much of the population tended to distrust young people identified as former combatants. Reintegration was exceptionally challenging because so large a portion of the young had served in fighting units, thereby losing education and being isolated from civilian life. As Patricia Fagen's discussion of DDR<sup>72</sup> reflects, the process in Liberia was relatively brief and followed traditional strategies which, in country after country, had failed to achieve the productive and durable integration of former combatants in war-torn societies, particularly with regard to capacity building and realistic opportunities for employment.

Humanitarian actions were characterized by confusing and sometimes contradictory coordination mechanisms. The confusion of roles increased when the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was incorporated into UNMIL and charged with humanitarian oversight in July 2004. With the addition of OCHA there was greater overlap of roles and responsibilities among the various agencies. There were frequent reports of tension and competition between agencies, and even of deliberate undermining of each other's authority. Partly in response, the Liberian government and UN officials established a new coordination framework in 2005, the Results Focused Transitional Framework, which took the place of a Consolidated Appeals Process.

Meanwhile, prior to the holding of the 2005 national elections, some IDPs in camps threatened to disrupt the elections unless they were helped to return home in time to vote<sup>73</sup> and some

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<sup>71</sup>Yoshikawa, Lynn, op cit.

<sup>72</sup>Patricia Fagen, op cit, pp. 47-49.

<sup>73</sup>"Liberia: Displaced threaten election disruption," IRIN, September 15, 2005, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/56353/www.irinnews.org/asia.xml>.

candidates reportedly tried to exploit the situation to their own advantage by promising assistance to return them to their homes in exchange for votes. In the end the disruption never materialized. However, the National Elections Commission did amend polling regulations to enable IDPs to vote in the camps, albeit for presidential and vice-presidential elections only.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, few IDPs chose to vote: out of 1.2 million people registered to vote, accounting for just over one-third of the general population, only five percent were IDPs.

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<sup>74</sup>See National Elections Commission, (NEC), August 5, 2005, <http://www.necliberia.org/content/legaldocs/legaldecs/decission38.pdf>.

## NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND PEACEBUILDING

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With the elections on November 23, 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the first female president in Africa. These elections were the first truly legitimate and relatively fair elections in national history. The process owed a great deal to international support and oversight. The time between the signing of the CPA and demobilization was a precarious one and the importance of mobilizing social networks within Liberia was key. In particular, Liberian women's groups played a key role in promoting transparency and participation. In 2005, Liberian women embarked on a nationwide voter and civic education campaign aimed at encouraging women to participate in the voter registration process. In a five day period they registered over 5,000 women.<sup>75</sup> President Sirleaf's success at the polls and her subsequent inauguration was (and still is) a milestone, not only for the women of Liberia but for all the women of Africa. Likewise, the women's activities continue to generate positive results both for their own rights seriously at risk due to domestic violence and sexual abuse and for Liberia's people.

Since her inauguration in 2006, the Liberian government has shown a commitment to achieving lasting and durable peace by launching numerous peace building programs, including strengthening the capacities of state actors to resolve conflict. Efforts have also been focused on initiatives to strengthen national and local capacities. This is not to say that the Sirleaf government is immune from accusations of corruption and mistaken policies.<sup>76</sup> However, there is no doubt about the president's commitment to the daunting tasks to bring durable peace and development to Liberia.

Following the decision to place Liberia on the agenda of the UN's Peacebuilding Commission, President Sirleaf emphasized a number of particularly important areas for the Commission to address:<sup>77</sup>

- access to justice
- management of land and natural resources
- political polarization
- the relationship between the State and its citizens
- youth issues.

The government and the PBC adopted the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC) to guide the PBC's engagement. The SMC established the three Peacebuilding priorities: rule of law,

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<sup>75</sup>Ekiyor, T. and Gbowee, L., "Women's Peace Activism in West Africa: The WIPNET Experience, in People Building Peace II," 2005.<http://www.peoplebuildingpeace.org/thestories>.

<sup>76</sup>The Liberian media and political opponents have also accused her of having failed to oppose Taylor's rise to power, although the only evidence of this comes from the early years of his rise to power when his intentions were not yet clear.

<sup>77</sup> "United Nations Peacebuilding Fund", <http://www.unpbf.org/countries/liberia/>.

security sector reform and national reconciliation,<sup>78</sup> and these have been further developed in the Liberia Peacebuilding Program. In an attempt to fill important peace keeping gaps, a ‘Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation’ was formulated in March 2013.

However, despite these advancements, intra-communal cohesion and trust, both of which are important indicators of reconciliation, have yet to be achieved. Some communities remain fragmented and perceptions of entitlement and legitimacy are often distorted. Reform and conflict resolution mechanisms at local and national levels do not adequately address inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-generational tensions over natural resource management and long-term secure access to land. Muslims in counties in the center of the country have been especially affected and, in numerous cases, have not been able to recover land lost during the conflict. These remain critical challenges to peace and reconciliation in Liberia. Liberia was added to the Peacekeeping Agenda because both national officials and the international community considered the hard won peace to be threatened on several fronts. Numerous reports, both by the UN and donors, affirm that the country remains fragile and peace consolidation is still needed. The need for continuing emphasis on reconciliation and peace consolidation are beyond debate.<sup>79</sup>

It is important to underscore that the 14 year Liberian conflict (1989 - 2003) polarized communities that once co-existed. The major warring factions and their supporters divided along ethnic religious and social lines to a greater extent than had been the case historically. The role of the relief community in the supporting the basis social needs and services of Liberian provided an essential safety net for most Liberians, but the Liberian government has been challenged to resume its responsibilities for social services which the humanitarian community provided for many years.

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<sup>78</sup> "Peacebuilding Commission Adopts Draft Statement Laying Out Terms of Partnership with Liberian Government to Strengthen Rule of Law, Security-Sector Reform," UN General Assembly, November 15, 2010, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/pbc75.doc.htm>.

<sup>79</sup> See Rachel Locke, *Busan and Beyond: Implementing the 'New Deal' for Fragile States* July 2012. <http://www.interpeace.org/documents/international-dialogue/306-busan-and-beyond-implementing-the-qnew-dealq-for-fragile-states-english/file> ; See also UNSC/11114 September 10, 2013, summarizing the report of UN Special Representative Karin Landren who described Liberia's quest for 'unified nationhood' as "a work in progress."

## CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS LEARNED AND CURRENT CONCERNS

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Almost ten years ago, the Liberian government decided to close the IDP camps and to begin a national process of reconstruction and reconciliation. Rather than considering the particular needs of IDPs and returning refugees – many of whom undoubtedly became IDPs – the government decided to prioritize issues of youth employment and rural development. These are both issues which affect IDPs, but it is regrettable that the government and the international community did not prioritize support for the displaced to find solutions. Without basic data on the numbers of displaced who found solutions or who remain in limbo, it is difficult to draw conclusions about their on-going needs or about the relationship between ending displacement and security. Given the number of competing problems (most recently the Ebola epidemic) and the scarcity of resources, the government has not made IDPs a priority.

Displacement is both a security and a development issue. The massive displacement during and following the conflict continues to strain limited public services, create insecurity and fuel urbanization. There is concern that the lack of solutions for the displaced could threaten the country's fragile peace and security. Resolving displacement is also central to the government's development agenda. As mentioned above, the fact is that the war – and the displacement – has fundamentally changed the economic basis of Liberia's existence. It is unlikely, for example, that IDPs who have lived in Monrovia and other cities for years will return to their rural communities, with implications both for the urban and rural areas.

There are several lessons to be drawn from the Liberian conflict. Mistakes made early in the process of response to displacement have had repercussions in subsequent years. The government and international agencies did not implement a registration procedure nor a process to ascertain what solutions IDPs themselves wanted. The authorities assumed that all the IDPs were willing to return, an assumption that proved erroneous. The weak follow up programs for IDPs and returning refugees, especially in cities, was a direct consequence.

Likewise, with regard to the demobilized youth, they were and are seen as a major security concern by donors and the Liberian government. Part of the blame for their poor social and economic integration lies in inadequacies of the reintegration including for displaced youth, employment creation and training activities. The DDR programs left most of these youth without prospects for a better future.

Although Liberia recently celebrated ten years of relative peace, Liberian women, and in particular, rural women and displaced women living in the border areas, continue to experience various forms of human rights abuses, marginalization and exclusion. Incidences of violence incurred during 14 years of war have continued as manifest in continued widespread cases of rape, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. And yet the Liberian experience also demonstrates that important role that women and women's organizations can play in bringing about an end to conflict.

While Liberia will unquestionably benefit from the present focus on infrastructure development in its post-conflict recovery process, there is a critical need for policies by both government and non-governmental institutions to address some of the consequences of the country's massive and long-term displacement, particularly its impact on urbanization.

Slums, as Mike Davis argues, have both positive and negative implications for a country's development.<sup>80</sup> In the case of Liberia, growing urbanization fueled by IDPs who were not properly reintegrated into their various areas of origin has exerted pressure on fragile environments, limited resources and exacerbated health hazards. The slum communities have a potential for productivity and social contribution which has yet to be realized. Instead of policies aimed at expulsion and exclusion, the authorities should be seeking their positive inclusion the urban fabric.

Liberia has made significant progress on various fronts, especially infrastructure development and security issues. Yet, current prospects for sustainable peace in Liberia remain tenuous. IDPs still contemplate return, but those who wish to do so are unable to find livelihoods, shelter, food security and health services in their places of origin.<sup>81</sup> Addressing these gaps would facilitate the return of IDPs and decrease the pressures triggered by urbanization. Alleviating this situation constitutes unfinished business for the peace process and the Liberian government.

Although the government of Liberia has made great strides in setting up and developing its internal security apparatus, without the significant role played by the international community in helping to preserve peace in Liberia since the end of the conflict in 2003, Liberia could have relapsed into conflict. Support for security sector reform and for DDR by UNMIL and by the US government likely prevented further displacement and probably enabled some IDPs to return to their communities. As UNMIL and UN entities that once provided assistance continue to draw down, Liberia will be challenged to assume the responsibilities of providing services to its displaced citizens needing assistance and international support will continue to be needed.

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<sup>80</sup>Mike Davis, *The Planet of Slums*, Verso, September 17, 2007, suggests some positive political and social implications of expanding slums. They produce new agents that have the ability to resist the technologies of empire and the neoliberal orthodoxy.

<sup>81</sup>Patricia Fagen, op cit. pp 47-49.



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