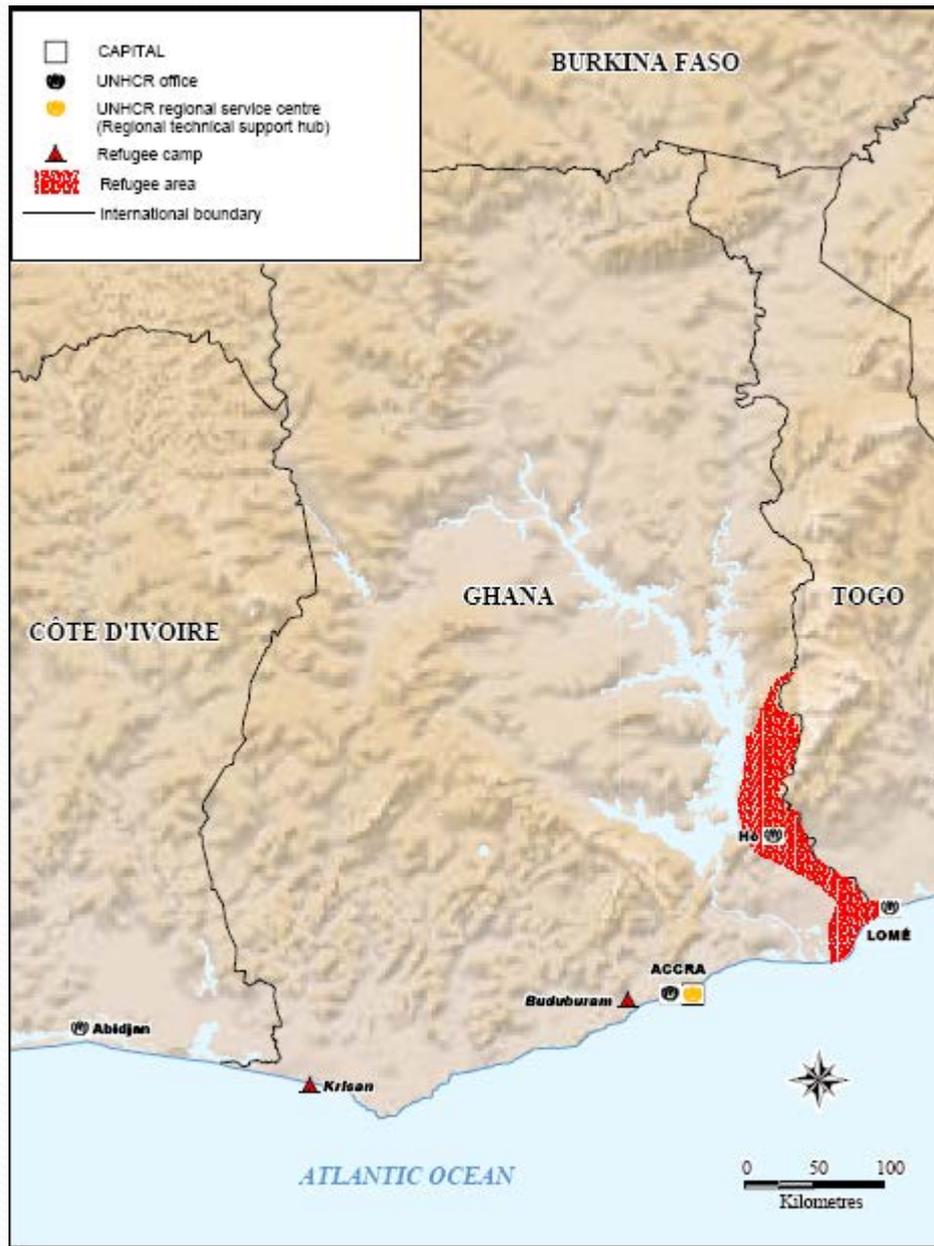


Civil War and Forced Migration: A case study of the livelihoods Strategies of Liberian Refugee Women in Ghana

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Introduction

The study had three main objectives:

- firstly, it examined the livelihood strategies of Liberian women refugees in Ghana.
- Secondly, it examined the role(s) played by the UNHCR, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in providing material assistance to Liberian women refugees in Ghana
- Finally, it examined problems encountered by these refugee women in their efforts to earn a living.

Hypothesis

- My argument in this study is that Liberian refugee women in Ghana are not just passive recipients of handouts.

Introduction continues

- The study area was the **Buduburam refugee camp** in Ghana and involved women refugees of ages 18 and above
- Methods of data collection:
 - ❖ Interview
 - ❖ Focus Group Discussion
 - ❖ Observation
- Triangulation: Internal validity

Some Statistics

- By the close of 2006, there were an estimated 9.9 million refugees globally constituting roughly one third (30%) of UNHCR's population of concern with women accounting for 49% of this figure (UNHCR, 2006).
- At the end of 2013, there were 16.7 million refugees worldwide. According to available data, women and girls accounted for 49% of the refugee population in 2013, virtually unchanged compared to the 48% recorded in 2012. (UNHCR, 2013)

Liberian Refugee: How it began

- December 1989
- Liberians who escaped to Ghana began arriving around May 1990
- By the end of September 1990, there were about 7,000
- ❖ By 2003 there were 42,466. Women constituted 25,000
- 2,000 settled on their own in Accra

- **Initial Help**
- ❖ Ghanaian churches and generous individuals
- ❖ UNHCR

Findings

- Age : Range between 20 and 65
- ❖ The age group of 20 to 39 years were more likely to take up economic activities demanding more physical energy than the age groups of 40 years and above. Therefore, we can conclude that age influences the choice of livelihoods strategies and is thus an important asset.

- 25.0% were widowed
- ❖ 37.5% of these women have lost their husbands to the war
- Households headed by a woman with no male partner, designated as female headed households constituted 77.5%. This meant in all these cases respondents were the heads of their households.
- Only 10% of respondents said their households were male headed while 12.5% said it was jointly headed with their husbands and themselves.

Findings

Current accommodation

- The following narrations show how respondents have been sheltering themselves:
- *At the moment I live with a friend. We built the house ourselves. Through some camp NGOs we learnt how to build and we did it ourselves. UNHCR provided us with wood nails and roofing sheets for roofing.*

Findings : Life before the War

- 40% of respondents were working in the formal sector
- ❖ *“I worked with the Liberian Government hospital as an x-ray technician before the civil war, I earned enough to contribute to the family budget”.*
- ❖ *“My life before the war was a good one; I was an entrepreneur . I was even in my own house and I was married and living with my husband and children. I had my own business as an interior decorator. I was able to travel on vacation to visit other relatives with my children”*

Livelihood Strategies

- Upon arrival, respondents survive with the help of **UNHCR, State agencies, churches and charitable organisations**. However, with time (**since 2006**), resources dwindled. None of the respondents I interviewed except two participants at the focus group discussion were currently receiving food ration or any form of aid from UNHCR.

Respondents by their livelihoods strategies.

Income generating activities	Frequency	Percentage
Food Vending	4	8.0
Trading	21	42.0
Hair Dressing/Hair Plaiting	13	26.0
Dress making	6	12.0
Teaching	1	2.0
Administrative work with NGOs	2	4.0
Remittances	2	4.0
“ <i>Susu</i> ” Collection	1	2.0
Total	50	100

Influences on the Choice of livelihood Strategy

- *“I have been in this camp for six years and I have tried to do various things for me to survive; now I sell shoes and dresses among others. Because this is what the little money I have can do. I have tried several times to work in the formal sector in Ghana but they will not give me work because I am not a Ghanaian”*
- *“Since I do not have capital I can only sell this charcoal. May be, one day, I will expand when I have the money”*





Support from UNHCR, other International and local Organizations, and the Government of Ghana

- The Ghana Red Cross set up a clinic, World Relief provided water and other aid organizations also participated in relief efforts.
- In 1993, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) began vocational skills training. Refugees were taught construction, carpentry, sewing and community health. Also in 1993 UNHCR initiated an agriculture and micro-loan programme in an attempt to promote refugee self-reliance.

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- The National Catholic Secretariat : food distribution to the vulnerable
 - The Assemblies of God church: health and sanitation.
 - The Christian Council: education and religious matters.
 - Women's initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE): Women's Empowerment and Economic Development program since 2004

Support from State Agencies:

- Legal provision PNDC Law 305 in 1992: In 27 August 1993, the government of Ghana established the Ghana Refugee Board as the official government counterpart of UNHCR in with the responsibility to oversee government policy on refugee issues including refugee status determination
- Land: the government of Ghana made land available at Buduburam

Problems Affecting livelihoods Strategies

- Lack of employment opportunity
- Low wages
- Lack of capital
- Discrimination

Hypothesis

- Liberian women refugees have not been necessarily crippled by their status as refugees. They are capable of navigating obstacles and capitalising on opportunities to live either with or without humanitarian assistance. Therefore findings of this study have supported the hypothesis.

Current Status

- In June 2012, refugee status for Liberian refugees formally ceased; UNHCR have since been urging refugees to return to Liberia (UNHCR 2011&2013).

Thank you