



Liberia – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 8 December 2011

Information on failed asylum seekers returned to Liberia.

A report from the *UN High Commissioner for Refugees*, in paragraphs 203-204, states:

“The vast majority of Liberians were victimized in some way during the war, most often by being forcibly displaced for a short or long period during the fighting. Well over a million left the country as refugees or became IDPs. A majority of war affected Liberians, it is likely, never registered either as refugees or as IDPs, but left the areas of conflict and found refuge with friends or family for a short or long period of time. A common story is of people who were driven from home or places of refuge more than once, and escaped to places both inside and/or outside of Liberia. Today the country is largely at peace but, eight years on, unknown numbers of citizens uprooted by conflict are neither secure nor securely settled. The relationship between political authorities and parts of the population is still troubled.” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (Policy Development and Evaluation Service) (August 2011) *Uprooted and unreturned: A comparative review of durable solutions for people displaced by conflict in Colombia and Liberia*)

In a section titled “Refugee and IDP returns” (paragraph 275) this report states:

“Of the 500,000 to 700,000 Liberians believed to have sought refuge in the West Africa region, UNHCR registered 233,264 in Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. UNHCR formally repatriated 95,584 by 2007 and estimates that some 350,000 of the Liberians who crossed into neighbouring West African countries returned spontaneously at the end of the conflict. Coordination and collaboration with UNMIL facilitated the return process. Those refugees who were working productively in their countries of exile were eager to remain in many cases, knowing how difficult life would be at home.” (ibid, p.53)

A section titled “Uprooted Liberians in Monrovia” (paragraphs 322 – 323) states:

“IDPs live alongside the returned refugees who left their communities temporarily or permanently and former combatants. Absent the 14 year conflict, far fewer would have chosen urban settings for their futures, but see no other options at present. Observers and researchers of Monrovia slums concur that the slums today include people who underwent different trajectories during the conflict. Generally people choose to live among people from the same region or ethnicity, but residents maintain that where regional and ethnic diversity exists in their communities, it rarely causes tension. There are other issues that loom large and do not bode well for the future of the uprooted people who have come to live in the city: First, their extremely limited economic opportunities are almost entirely in the informal sector; second, they have created communities on land to which they have no formal claim, hence live with the constant threat of evictions; and third, they are vulnerable to physical harm, crime and youth gang violence.” (ibid, p.60)

The Introduction to a *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* research paper refers to the situation for refugees returning to Liberia as follows:

“The results of their return were mixed. Upon their arrival in Liberia, some settled in with relatively little stress whilst others confronted a series of daunting hardships. The process of integration experienced by these Liberian returnees, including the construction of new livelihoods in their country of origin, was largely influenced by their asset conditions. In particular, their levels of access to social networks in Liberia played a principal determinant role in their integration.” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (Policy Development and Evaluation Service) (June 2011) *‘Repatriation is not for everyone’: the life and livelihoods of former refugees in Liberia*, p.2)

In a section titled “The significance of personal connections” this paper states:

“The integration process for returnees does not lend itself to generalisation: some faced a number of challenges in settling in whilst others managed to establish their life with relatively little stress. In the initial phase of return, access to shelter and daily food was essential for all returnees. To secure these fundamentals, a returnee’s personal contacts often played a chief role. In particular, whether a returnee had access to assistance from relatives or not made a considerable difference in his/her initial integration adjustments.” (ibid, p.6)

An *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* overview document for Liberia states:

“By the end of 2010, the Liberian government and its international counterparts considered the internal displacement situation over. Nonetheless, the situation of an unknown number of displaced people, who had sought refuge in public buildings in the capital Monrovia and who had never registered as IDPs, remained unclear. Disputes over the use and ownership of land in return areas have continued; the failure to resolve these issues has stood in the way of the re-establishment of long-term security. Recurrent outbursts of violence between rival ethnic groups, such as those between Muslims and Christians in Lofa County in February 2010, have demonstrated the fragility of the situation. Violence against women and girls has remained widespread. At the same time, displacement and migration into urban areas has put great pressure on urban facilities, and in October, the National Land Commission convened a conference to formulate guidelines for the development of an urban land policy as a step to address the land issues in the country.” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (23 March 2011) *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2010 – Liberia*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

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