Uprooted and unrestored

A comparative review of durable solutions for people displaced by conflict in Colombia and Liberia

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Preface

As I prepared to leave my post as UNHCR Chief of Mission in El Salvador at the close of 1993, I had reason to feel proud of what our office had achieved. We had completed the repatriation of Salvadoran refugees from countries in the region, the vast majority of whom settled in communities in the rural areas they had fled during years of heavy fighting. The refugees and IDPs organized themselves and shared dreams of collective progress. Donors generously helped to restore damaged infrastructure and introduce income generation projects. Quick impact projects, QIPs, still an important tool of early recovery strategies today, were first tried in Central America.

UNHCR and UNDP were collaborating as they had never done before thanks to a donor supported programme called CIREFCA, aimed at reintegrating refugees and internally displaced persons throughout the region. CIREFCA also contained peacebuilding components of dialogue and reconciliation at all levels. In El Salvador our office had played a leading role in restoring personal documentation to hundreds of thousands of people. In 1994, democratic elections produced a government with representatives of the former insurgents in office locally and in the national Congress.

Yet as early as 1994, there were causes for concern that the mechanisms and measures we had championed would not prove sustainable and lead to development. The large number of NGO organizations began leaving around 1994 and UNHCR downsized after my departure. Other humanitarian agencies did likewise. Donor attention was drawn to Bosnia, Rwanda and other emergency situations. The Salvadoran economy was weak and unemployment high.

In short, I had participated and helped to lead one of the best conceived post-conflict reintegration and recovery programmes to date, but could readily detect the weaknesses inherent in its formulation. It was short-term, based on assumptions that the refugees who so badly wanted to return to their homes would be able to remake their livelihoods there, and that the new democratically elected government would be able both to move toward development and address poverty and inequity.

Peace has held in El Salvador but the rural economy has not. The Central America region, especially El Salvador, is arguably as violent as during the period of armed combat, but now the armed parties are engaged in crime and drug trafficking. The repatriate communities have not prospered. On the positive side, many of the refugee leaders of that time are still active and politically engaged, as are the leaders of the grassroots organizations that supported them during the return process.

The QIPs did buy some time and fostered reconciliation, but were too short-term and minimally funded to allow for lasting results. The small scale income generation projects, agricultural and otherwise, produced products that could not be marketed. The returnee refugee/IDP population, and especially their sons and daughters, migrated in large numbers to San Salvador, which has grown exponentially and, when possible, moved on to the United States or Canada which already had large Salvador refugee populations from the war. The poor in El

Salvador today survive in very large part thanks to remittances from migrants now living in the US, Canada and elsewhere.

A few years later, in 1999, I was in Mozambique to evaluate the impacts of a Canadian-German community participation and development project. I was taken to a small village, some miles from the city of Beira to interview community members. The project mangers expressed dismay that they had not succeeded in enlisting the participation of an important number of community residents and they were unable to determine the reason. I was told that the community consisted entirely of people who had fled as refugees to Malawi and returned after the war to resume their lives. I was assured that the community, minus the many who had been killed, was intact. The people who left returned to the same place.

In talking to the assembled village residents, however, I asked the question that anyone who has worked over the years with migrant populations would ask: "Were all of you who returned here from Malawi born in this community?" That question had never been asked. It turned out that approximately a third of the population originated from other parts of Mozambique but had chosen to relocate to this community because of its good land and favourable location.

The village leaders confirmed that there was land available because of the high death toll and due to out migration. But, the newcomers were from different places and different tribes and had to be vetted before being accepted as community members. This process was still ongoing, hence the non-participation of certain residents. This experience has stayed with me as a clear demonstration of war-induced mobility in a traditional society. Yet, I have seen few donor strategies that have adequately accounted for the need of people who have been uprooted by conflict to continue uprooting themselves in order to survive.

In El Salvador and Mozambique as in almost all countries that have experienced years of conflict, families and individuals are likely to lose - or choose to forget - the ties than have bound them for generations to a particular place. In every country where I have been privileged to evaluate the impacts of international assistance and post-conflict programmes, I have seen that conflicts are followed by accelerated rural-urban migration. The uprooted IDPs and refugees who desperately longed to return to their homes are living a few years later, in urban slums, and they are no longer differentiated by international donors or their own governments from poor people generally.

Colombia, one of the two cases in this study, is somewhat exceptional in this regard in its designation of forcibly uprooted people in the category of victims of conflict in need of restitution. This study offers what I hope will be useful observations on the implications of Colombia's policies and, on the Liberian side, the validity of seeking solutions for those forcibly displaced by means of a strategy intended to give priority to addressing poverty. Outsiders still have much to learn about how wars affect traditional societies and produce important changes in priorities, decision making, local authorities and local economies.

I have remained particularly interested in the ongoing and difficult debates within UNHCR because it is the organization on the front line of response to refugees and IDPs. The organization has struggled to define where its mandate should and should not extend after refugees repatriate and have recovered their basic rights. The evolution has been significant,

and is most evident in the fact that it has become a lead agency for IDP issues in several countries, including the ones covered in this report.

Conflict, displacement and return

1.   Over the past decade protracted conflicts in every corner of the globe have led to the protracted displacement of millions of people. Having been forced to live as refugees and internally displaced persons, (IDPs), their lives and livelihoods disrupted, they cannot readily recover or reintegrate. Demobilized combatants also are among the people whose lives have been changed, not so much the high and middle ranking commanders who have chosen their vocation, but the rank-and-file fighters who were recruited or forced to serve at a very young age. Separate short-term assistance regimes are offered to people identified in each of the three categories. While differing amounts of assistance frequently create resentment, the results are disappointing for all three.

2.   As the assistance ends and humanitarian aid givers are leaving, large numbers of demobilized combatants still have not found employment or a place they can settle, and larger numbers of returned refugees and IDPs have been unable to remake their lives either in their original homes or elsewhere. Governments, international agencies and donors are well aware that their programmes intended to reintegrate war affected populations do not result in durable solutions to the problem. But they follow the same strategies time and again, in country after country, and base these strategies on premises that this report intends to call into question.

3.   The kinds of programme for post-conflict recovery that have been funded and executed over the years have been conceptually flawed by questionable assumptions about the realities facing the people targeted for 'reintegration'. People whose lives have been badly disrupted and who must make new lives in places that likewise have been disrupted physically, economically, politically and in all other ways, are not 'reintegrating' at all. They need to be incorporated, or integrated, into new social and economic contexts which they will be obliged to help create. This is a long-term and multifaceted process for which the typical international, short-term assistance project orientation produces fragile results, and excludes many of those most in need of support.

4.   The major flawed assumptions that undergird the process are: first, the assumption that bringing or sending people back to their places of origin is the best solution, or the solution those affected want above all other possible solutions; second, an assumption that enabling people to return to their places of origin is less complex or costly or more secure than other possible solutions; third, a widespread belief that for people of rural origin, life in urban settings is less desirable than in rural settings; and fourth, an assumption that humanitarian and development assistance should give lower priority to urban settings over rural settings, ignoring possible ways in which supporting peoples' lives in urban settings may reinforce rural vitality.

5.   This report does not argue against facilitating to the extent possible the ability of people to return to their places of origin after long absences. Nor does it argue against supporting agrarian revival and revitalizing the communities to which people do return. It does argue that all actors have underestimated the demographic transformations that follow from the economic

and social upheavals caused by protracted conflict and, consequently, underestimate the mobility that even the most traditional groups must adopt to survive.

6.   Government institutions are bound to be weak nationally and locally during and immediately following conflict. The challenge for governments is to establish their legitimacy and presence in war-torn areas of their countries by making their institutions respond better over time. In the interim, international organizations, donors and non government organizations play essential roles in all phases of war-to-peace transitions and in attending to the people who have been uprooted by conflict.

7.   International and governmental actors formulate early recovery solutions for uprooted people, by and large, either in a framework of humanitarian law and practice applying to refugees and IDP protection and assistance, or in order to remove fighters from violent practices so that peacebuilding can take place. The early recovery solutions are explicitly designed as short-term measures that enable the respective returnees and former combatants to reincorporate themselves into the social fabric. These objectives are valid as entry points. International actors involved in reintegration and the government institutions at the local and national levels need thereafter to reinforce each other's efforts and adjust to changed and changing conditions.

8.   Integration is not an international humanitarian programme in favour for the victims of conflict. Rather, the efficacy of this multi-year process is strategic, practical, and necessary for the long-term sustainability of peace. As will be described through the cases of Liberia and Colombia, inadequately sustained attention to uprooted populations prolongs and exacerbates the legacies of conflict and adds to the burdens facing already taxed national and local institutions.

9.   While long-term planning for the integration of uprooted populations is often discouraged on grounds of cost, the greater cost both in human and security terms lies in reliance on short-term, fragmented measures targeted to artificially defined categories of beneficiaries. The long-term stabilization and integration of the men, women and children who have been uprooted by the conflict draws less attention and fewer resources than should be the case in the equation.

10.   Colombia and Liberia represent very different situations but share an inability to find adequate alternatives for their large and still uprooted population. The fact that Colombia and Liberia are different in so many ways strengthens the argument for re-evaluating the assumptions on which integration outcomes in both countries are assessed. The country specific narratives are meant to illustrate phenomena one can identify in nearly all places that, similarly, have experienced protracted civil conflict with large scale displacement

Colombia and Liberia

11.   The two countries, Colombia and Liberia, are vastly different in terms of wealth, size (Colombia has about 45 million people while Liberia has just over three million), and political culture. Colombia can call on resources, institutional development, skilled human capital, and overall infrastructure (including health and education) well beyond what is found in Liberia.

12. Liberia is a tribally based society, where identity is very much defined by tribe and region. While Colombians have strong regional identities, it is not a tribal society. The ethnic minorities, Afro-Colombian and indigenous Colombians, nevertheless, are major victims of displacement. Liberia is considerably more dependent on international engagement than is Colombia, thanks to the capacities of national institutions in the latter. The major factor that affects displacement in Colombia is that the conflict has not been resolved and displacement is therefore ongoing. In Liberia the conflict is over but the legacies of that conflict continue to promote instability.

13. Displacement and conflict have widely disrupted lives and livelihoods in both countries. Colombia continues to experience violence from two groups of insurgents and imperfectly demobilized militias, as well as criminal actions and violence from drug related bands. Families forced to leave their original homes may be displaced two or three times again.

14. In Colombia, it is estimated that 10 per cent or more of the country has experienced displacement due to conflict and related causes. The phenomenon of displacement has consequences not only for the three to five million displaced persons themselves, but also for the country's economic, judicial and political institutions. Virtually every Colombian department has expelled or received the internally displaced (IDPs) and usually both.

15. In Colombia the government has created a formal registry of IDPs who are eligible for protection, benefits and subsidies. The registry defines the category of displaced persons narrowly, hence does not fully cover the population that has suffered displacement. Nevertheless, the state recognizes its responsibility toward IDPs and international and civil society organizations target assistance on their behalf.

16. A growing population of refugees has found refuge in areas around Colombia's borders with Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama. What becomes of them if and when they return to Colombia is not tracked. It is also well known that refugees go back and forth across the Ecuadorian and Venezuelan borders, but there are no counts of returned refugees and there have been no formal repatriations. It is assumed but not documented that these refugees return to their homes or, more likely, merge with the IDP population.

17. In Liberia there is no defined status of returned refugee or displaced person. Those who were displaced are assumed to be managing on their own resources, at least to the extent of other poor and war-affected people. Moreover, defining who was or was not an IDP, as opposed to a refugee or a combatant, can be difficult. The majority of Liberians were uprooted at some point during the years of intense conflict. Given the chaotic patterns of conflict and flight over 14 years, the same individual may well have been in all three categories at different times and the categories are fungible.

18. Colombia's institutional response to displaced persons as a defined category entails remarkably comprehensive legislation on IDP rights which has been continually tested and refined, at this writing under a new administration. That legislation mandates state responsibilities for IDPs at the national and local levels and imposes responsibilities on relevant national ministries. IDPs have their own organizations that can exert influence on policy makers.

19.	The legislation has not been effectively implemented in important respects, but its premises have been upheld and strengthened by the Colombian Constitutional Court. Colombia's civil society monitors the legislation and the institutions that carry out the legislated measures to protect IDP and other citizens. Civil society organizations single out IDPs as outstanding victims of conflict and impunity. To what extent, if at all, is this kind of approach possible or relevant for Liberia?

20.	Liberia's institutional capacity, nationally and locally, is still very weak and the civil society organizations are heavily dependent on outside assistance. The country has little in the way of judicial structures to protect its citizens, who are more likely to rely on traditional authorities than on the institutions of the state which they distrust. This is very slowly changing. Liberian and international actors treat the hundreds of thousands uprooted by conflict as an extension of the country's large population of poor. They identify youth and youth employment as the country's major challenge, often equating 'youth' with former combatants.

21.	Liberian national and international development strategies have primarily focused on strengthening security, poverty reduction, gender equity, the resolution of land conflicts and rebuilding basic infrastructure. These issues are vital to the whole population, but particularly to the uprooted, so many of whom are young and unemployed. However, the country largely lacks programmes and projects that deal with prolonged 'uprootedness' *per se*.

22.	The common features of the two countries go beyond the consequences of conflict and massive displacement. Prior to the sharp spike in displacement in Colombia in the late 1980s and the outbreak of civil conflict in Liberia at the end of that decade, both countries were predominantly rural and the rural population depended primarily on subsistence agriculture and local markets.

23.	As in most countries where rural poverty prevails, peasants migrated to the cities in significant numbers, largely but by no means wholly, for economic improvement.[1] In both cases, rural injustices and poverty spurred conflicts and distrust of state institutions. In the present context, the families who have been uprooted in both countries still constitute, in large part, an "excluded" segment of society, i.e. poorly integrated in both rural and urban settings. Younger people are less often drawn to rural livelihoods, although land ownership and land recovery continue to be major goals for their families.

24.	In Colombia young people wrenched away from their homes before they came of age rarely experience the degree of nostalgia for the isolated farms where they were born. Despite continuing strong tribal identities and attachment to land ownership, the rejection of the rural social order is equally if not more pronounced among youth in Liberia, so many of whom have spent their formative years in refugee camps and in combat. In both countries, IDP children do not have adequate access to education and young adults typically have lost years of schooling because of conflict and flight. Both countries have experienced serious spikes in domestic violence and anti social behaviour which derive from loss of safety nets and social cohesion.

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[1] In Colombia, there was already rural unrest, insurgent movements and landowner repression, all of which caused people to flee the land. In Liberia, land disputes, conflicts with traditional authorities and ethnic tensions also spurred flight.

25.   Today, in the major cities of both Colombia and Liberia one finds a very large, originally rural, population that still lacks a durable place of residence and livelihood. Cities, large and smaller, are overpopulated and unable to absorb the new population who, in turn, will not or cannot return to their previous rural villages. Unemployment is extremely high throughout the population, and notably so among the uprooted from more traditional social sectors.

26.   A combination of continuing threats of reprisals, contested legal claims and weak judicial remedies still impede return, restitution and compensation for losses despite newly legislated remedies for land restitution in each country. In both countries it is clear that it will be years before favourable conditions can be created for massive settlement and resettlement in rural areas. Very likely the majority now living in cities will never revert full time to farming.

27.   In both countries few major human rights violations or war crimes have been punished and the sense of injustice is profound. Perpetrators of extreme cruelty who, among other criminal acts, are responsible for stealing land and forcing people to flee have largely escaped prosecution. In Colombia a process of 'peace and justice' is underway and there are hopes for stronger implementation thanks to recent legislation. As for domestic impunity, Colombia has passed new laws to restore lost property and hold rights violators to account.

28.   In Liberia, there are cries for transitional justice to go beyond trials for the major leaders. Liberian land laws are being formulated, regularized and better enforced. The victimization of women was prevalent and virtually unpunished during the conflict, but the laws now recognize rape as a serious crime, and perpetrators (when they can be identified) are treated as criminals. Extensive corruption persists in both countries. Millions of people in both countries are neither able to integrate themselves and their families in a fixed place, nor to build a secure future. This fact challenges national peace, security and development.

29.   One could have chosen other countries where conflicts have produced massive displacement and insecurity. The choice of Colombia and Liberia is governed by two major factors: First, the fact that they do differ in so many aspects while sharing similar difficulties in integrating uprooted citizens strengthens the argument that standard solutions that have produced sub-standard results should be revised. Second, both Colombia and Liberia have in common the advantage of governments that are committed to achieving integration and, for the most part, have been working in good faith with international bodies to achieve better outcomes.

Premises of the report

30.   Following restoration of peace, people displaced by protracted conflict receive international and national assistance intended to enable their 'reintegration'. The term reintegration suggests that people uprooted by conflict should be able to restore their lives and livelihoods and be re-absorbed into familiar social and economic contexts. However, what is called reintegration by no means is a straightforward process, and achieving it requires understanding the multitude of ways that a given society has been transformed as a result of conflict. Longer and more destructive conflicts increase the difficulties people have in putting together their lives.

31. It is more accurate to use the term 'integration' than 'reintegration' because war-uprooted populations must find their ways in new contexts in societies that have been transformed. Whether people return exactly to the places from which they were displaced or seek a future in another location based on different kinds of livelihoods, they find themselves in largely or wholly unfamiliar environments.

32. Returning refugees, IDPs, and demobilized-disarmed combatants are within their own countries and presumably have a choice about where they will return. Peace treaties, refugee law, and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement explicitly recognize the rights of these groups to reclaim their former homes or an equivalent home in their places of origin or to settle in other places, including the places they have sought temporary refuge within the national territory. If a conflict is of relatively short duration and the outcome brings peace, stability and assurances of respect for human rights, those who have fled are more likely to be able to return and to resume previous livelihoods in their former communities.

33. When conflicts have been prolonged and/or attainment of peace is incomplete, several factors combine to make it more difficult for people uprooted by conflict, on all sides, to return to the places they lived prior to the fighting, even if that is their choice. In protracted civil conflicts such as those in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Burundi, Central America, Colombia, Nepal, West Africa and elsewhere, the physical, economic, political and, especially, human disruptions have been so profound that the usual array of relatively short-term humanitarian assistance and rapid development projects do not bring about durable options.

34. When demobilized combatants and the forcibly displaced civilians return on their own, or are brought back to places of origin, they have not thereby achieved a viable or durable solution. Their homecoming places them at the beginning of another phase in recovering from displacement. They are faced with significant challenges in terms of security, property allocation, economic viability and governance in their former homes. Their neighbours, like themselves, will have been transformed by wartime experiences.

35. When victims of conflict-induced displacement do not or cannot return to their original homes and, instead, seek livelihoods in other parts of the national territory, they inevitably encounter legal, social and cultural barriers to integration. Long-term survival in new places depends on engagement of and acceptance by the host community. Following destructive and divisive conflict, the integration process takes place before local and national institutions are adequately established - or re-established - to ensure security and rule of law and to restore local economies.

36. In sum, when people have been uprooted for long periods of time due to conflict, the restoration of peace offers opportunities but returnees still face an uphill struggle to remake their lives and to find the most promising situation in a still unstable environment. And the corollary: achieving successful return initiatives will require governments and international organizations to prepare the ground with integrated and coordinated programmes of protection and security, socio-economic assistance projects, social services and institutional support.

37. Disruptive long lasting conflicts transform traditional societies. Villages and communities are broken apart and their residents are forced to flee. To survive, people who have maintained their way of life for generations become dependent on strangers and, in the process, lose

longstanding customs, lines of authority and social networks. If they are able to return to their home regions, the devastation they find makes self sufficiency extremely difficult. So, they are driven by insecurity or economic hardship to migrate again.

38.   In fact, many migrate not only by necessity but by choice. Rural populations displaced in the course of protracted conflict invariably develop changed perspectives on identity and prospects. Having been forced to leave traditional homes, refugee and IDPs become more open to living in new settings. Amongst even most strongly traditional groups, mobility is likely to continue after conflict and to become an accepted norm, especially among the youth. Younger people who have been uprooted are less compliant with the traditional norms and authorities that governed their pre conflict communities and are more open to moving toward urban settings temporarily or permanently.

39.   Moreover, their parents are more likely to encourage them to seek opportunities to better themselves. This is particularly the case when rural areas are subject to continuing instability due to land conflicts, the fraying or loss of previous social networks and trust, and the weakness of the state or local/traditional authorities. As more and more people feel obliged seek livelihoods in different settings, the effect is to divide families and villages. The result is better outcomes for some but worse situations for the most vulnerable who cannot leave.

40.   Gender roles are very likely to be changed by forced displacement. On the one hand countless women in every continent are targeted for sexual abuse by armed militias and they suffer unspeakably, so much so that they can no longer return to live with their husbands and are rejected by their families. Alternatively, the women are widowed and with the loss of their husbands they typically lose rights to property, yet still must care for their children. Female-headed households are often surviving far from their original homes.

41.   Along with the accounts of gender based abuses and losses, however, there are accounts of female refugees, again on every continent, who are less dependent on male family members, who are exposed to education for the first time, and assume leadership roles. Among urban IDPs, women may be more easily employed and better adapted to the demands of urban life. Women are the overwhelming beneficiaries of micro finance and micro credit programmes that potentially lift them out of poverty. In both circumstances, their traditionally subordinate roles are challenged.

42.   The long-term demographic and social changes may prove positive, leading to greater diversity, tolerance, appreciation for justice and establishing the ground for political and economic modernization. This outcome is made more possible if, in fact, there are opportunities for stabilization and productive settlement within the national territory and if former victims of forced displacement are able to enhance capacities and contribute to society. The ability of a post-conflict state to integrate and reintegrate its uprooted populations is a major bellwether of a successful peace process.

Categories of the uprooted

43.   A premise of this report is that the early efforts of governments and the international community to promote integration are usually insufficient. A large number of returned

refugees, internally displaced, and former combatants are still uprooted when the programmes for training or humanitarian relief wind down.

- *Former combatants* benefit from programmes, demobilization disarmament and reintegration DDR, distinct from those of the IDPs and returned refugees. The success of peace processes depends on demobilizing and disarming the fighters and dismantling the command structures under which they served. DDR is an essential component of security sector restoration.

- The early post repatriation projects for *returned refugees* focus on providing returnees with basic survival needs. Although relegated to humanitarian organizations, programmes increasingly include development type projects intended to strengthen receptor communities.

- The internally *displaced populations* of concern in this examination range from people whose displacement is ongoing to those who have been displaced for extended periods. The latter neither have been able or willing to return to their original homes, nor to find satisfactory settlement elsewhere. As with returned refugees, humanitarian organizations are given responsibility for IDP attention.

44. Programmes targeted for former combatants have higher priority than those for returning refugees and IDPs. Programmes for returning refugees are more systematically implemented than those that benefit IDPs. Consistently, the initiatives in DDR programmes that related to R, i.e. reintegration are limited and leave beneficiaries without firm economic futures and often without firm settlement as well.

45. Repatriations and IDP return movements combine relief items with community based assistance. The former are quickly exhausted and the latter cannot compensate for the absence of sustained local level services, local economic opportunities and effective governance. National planning strategies have neglected to include uprooted populations in developmental objectives. Successful long-term integration has multiple economic and political facets, requires attention from nearly all national ministries, and calls for coordination of national level and local resources.

Former combatants

46. Peacekeepers and peacebuilders are acutely aware of the need to de-militarize regular and irregular troops, warlords, militia, and insurgents) at the outset of a peace process. The authority of civilian institutions depends on successful DDR. The reintegration component here is designed to restore contacts between ex-combatants and civilian authorities and society.

47. Former combatants who might otherwise persist in pursuing militaristic ends and violent means must be reprogrammed and prepared for civilian life. DDR is meant to turn post-conflict national security to civilian control. The DDR programmes do in fact serve a vital security need,

but are invariably insufficiently comprehensive either to transform the combatants into productive citizens or to incorporate them and their communities into agents for development.

48. In Colombia and Liberia, as elsewhere, the DDR processes have been disappointing and reintegration of the combatants into civilian communities is flawed. It is difficult in all cases to transform former fighters into peaceful, hard working and productive citizens, imbued with respect for the rule of law and civilian authority.[2] The difficulties are compounded by the fact that the invariably young people who take up arms have lost years of education and skills training and have very often severed their family and community ties.

49. Thus, like IDPs and returning refugees, these demobilized combatants are frequently left to fend for themselves, without firm settlement or sources of livelihoods, when the programmes designed for them come to an end. It is perhaps because ex combatants are widely considered as menaces to peace and a 'problem' that programmes for their reintegration are kept separate from those of returning refugees and IDPs who, in contrast, are widely viewed as victims. The usual practice is that DDR programmes are funded with voluntary funds and/or assessed UN funds. Funds for returning refugees and IDPs are the result of appeals from UNHCR and humanitarian agencies.

50. The projects within DDR programmes are typically short lived (a year or two) and focused primarily on the disarmament and demobilization phases; actions aimed at "reintegration" are limited in time and substance. Having been disarmed and demobilized, the former combatants will receive assistance in returning to their home communities or settling elsewhere, and will be trained in skills that are intended to prepare them for non-military employment.

51. DDR programmes normally contain some amount of psychosocial programming and peacebuilding workshops featuring training in conflict management, conflict transformation, tolerance and similar areas. Although often containing projects of great value, the programmes overall are too short and the component activities too fragmented to result in a sustained reintegration dynamic. The DDR process has been well described as promoting the reinsertion, rather than the reintegration of former combatants into the civilian community.

52. DDR programmes, as evaluated in accordance with the objective of "reinsertion," need to achieve two goals to be considered effective. First they should keep combatants from reigniting combat during the delicate post-peace agreement period when government institutions are especially fragile, and second, they should dismantle former command structures that may still govern the lives of the former combatants. The DDR programmes buy time during which broader peacebuilding mechanisms can be created and governments and national institutions are strengthened, especially in the security sector.

53. Successful transformations of combatants into civilians, however, have regularly been impeded by some or all of the following factors typical in post-conflict societies: unreliable and/or weak security sector institutions; political and economic power remaining in the hands of former warlords or commanders; community hostility toward former combatants; and

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[2] This report does not focus extensively on evaluations of DDR programmes, but recognizes that the outcomes are of concern not only to peacebuilding but to development and security sector institutions as well.

insufficient skills to maintain civilian livelihoods. Vocational training is part of nearly all demobilization programmes, but is problematic because it fails to promote useful skills, because the learned skills have no market, or employers are unwilling to hire former fighters. DDR training is not usually linked to subsequent employment.

54.   Criminal war lords, insurgent commanders and militia leaders may never be subjected to judicial review or punishment. Wartime leaders, with or without weapons, may retain sub-national power, particularly in places where state institutions and security forces are weak. This is prevalent both in Colombia and Liberia. The insurgent leaders or commanders thereby maintain control over many of their war time followers and dominate civilian authorities.

55.   It is critically important that former combatants are offered economic options that increase their independence from such control and draw them away from the former command structures under which they served during conflict. Frequently, by way of an integration plan, former combatants and insurgent leaders are offered opportunities to join in or merge with government armed forces, or to enter national police forces—with mixed success.

56.   If the R of DDR is meant to achieve actual 'reintegration', the process will incorporate assistance for former combatant in a context of community development. The former combatants are thereby linked to ongoing war-to-peace transition and to the government ministries and development agencies that address security, income generation, service provision, and governance issues. Efforts to this end reflect a national and donor understanding that the reintegration of former combatants cannot succeed in isolation of the generally war affected population.

57.   The question that presents itself is whether and for how long resources should be allocated through DDR programmes directly to the combatants and their families living within the community. Former fighters are returning to societies in which insecurity, poverty, disrupted communities and weak rule of law are very widely felt. Targeting benefits to combatants over civilian neighbours who have suffered at the hands of such combatants is known to exacerbate tensions, but the combatants themselves expect privileged treatment as a reward for having demobilized.

58.   There is no question about the importance of bringing former combatants into civilian society but it is far from self-evident that expanding the R in DDR programmes will achieve that objective. DDR programmes are motivated by security sector concerns, but integration initiatives are equally challenged by the dire problems of civilians not covered by such programmes. Critics contend that demobilized combatants who receive separate benefits over a long period acquire a sense of entitlement and dependency.

59.   No matter how the benefits delivery choices are determined, at some point the former combatants will share the experiences of other war-affected elements living in the same places. This being the case, many argue, former fighters should be incorporated earlier rather than later into community-based peacebuilding and receive the same benefits as others, adding, perhaps, further attention to special physical and psychological conditions acquired due to conflict.

60.   The weakness in this otherwise sensible concept, however, is that it assumes the former combatants have a community in which they are or can be embedded. The reality is that they

very often have lost past networks and roots and, therefore, community. Thus, the challenge of reintegrating combatants demands more innovative measures. A few such worthwhile innovations have been initiated in Liberia. As will be shown in the section on Colombia, the loss of community similarly prevails and impedes solutions for IDPs. Arrangements and largely separate programmes serving demobilizing combatants, returning refugees and IDPs will be further discussed in the two case studies that follow.

Solutions for displacement

61.   Civil conflicts and severe repression inevitably uproot major segments of the civilian population, turning whole regions into battlegrounds and disrupting formerly well-established ethnic communities. Peace agreements, reform agendas, and new leadership open the way for all who have been uprooted to be reabsorbed with the rights of citizenship and equitable development opportunities.

62.   While conflict is ongoing, those who fled across a national border can receive refugee recognition. This obliges their hosts in most cases to accord them protection and allow the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, to provide assistance in nutrition, health, education and other benefits. UNHCR is responsible for ensuring protection and assistance and receives contributions from donor nations for this purpose. Although IDPs still within their countries of origin are without this formal access to international protection, both governments and insurgents usually permit UNHCR, the ICRC and other entities to treat then as people of humanitarian concern, and they may receive humanitarian relief from the armed parties as well.

63.   Following peace agreements or the end of conflict, UNHCR brings the refugees who agree to return back to their own countries. (Host country governments are eager to see refugees depart as soon as peace agreements are in place.) Many refugees return spontaneously, without assistance, but all recognized refugee returnees are entitled to assistance for a period of time. The nature of the assistance and the length of time vary considerably. In UNHCR, the evolving trend is in favour of allotting only modest packages of food and materiel to individual returnee families so as to see them through a growing season (if they are farmers) or to help them establish themselves in a trade.

64.   During the 1990s, internationally negotiated peace agreements opened the way for several large-scale repatriations, and were sustained by relatively successful United Nations-organized post-conflict missions. UNHCR played a fundamental role in these missions, obtaining government acquiescence for return, negotiating the rights of returnees and providing initial assistance for their reintegration. In Namibia (1989), Cambodia (1991), El Salvador (1991), Mozambique (1992) and Bosnia (1996), mass repatriations transformed UNHCR's traditional approach to integration activities, which hitherto had consisted in assistance packages to individual returnee families and interventions to secure legal guarantees.

65.   In the current century, UNHCR is remaining long after peace agreements have been signed to address persistent insecurity and the obvious need for more protracted assistance. Thus, in addition to core legal concerns, UNHCR increasingly participates in development related activities. UNHCR has been contributing greater resources to social infrastructure and community improvement for the whole population in places absorbing returnees.

66.   Although IDPs are living within national borders, they too almost always need assistance in returning to communities of origin or finding new settlement locations. As citizens in their own countries, they can decide to live anywhere but, for better or worse, both governments and host communities encourage the return option.

67.   The quest for solutions is understood to be:

> The process by which refugees and internally displaced persons return to their areas of origin (or new areas in their own countries), and are reincorporated into their communities. Reintegration involves the establishment of conditions which enable returnees to exercise basic social, economic, civil, and political rights and which provide the basic elements of life, livelihood and dignity. While seeking to promote reconciliation and restitution for past interference with rights, it involves a repositioning of returnees as equal citizens and, in particular, the removal of any distinctions linked to their former displacement.[3]

68.   It proves all too often the case that despite significant early humanitarian investment the communities in question can neither absorb the returnees nor meet needs of the population already in place. Returnees find their communities to lack adequate health and education, basic infrastructure essential for agriculture and, most problematic, clear land and property titles. Land changes hands during conflict and land grabs are one of the most frequent causes of displacement. Another important obstacle facing returnees is inadequate security, perhaps due to land disputes or perhaps to hostility of armed and powerful factions still active in their regions of origin, who caused their flight in the first place.

69.   The international protection afforded to returned refugees does not last much beyond the departure of UNHCR, and responsibility for security, in any case, is the pre-eminent role of the state. In most respects, IDP returns to places of origin are limited by the same situations as those described for returned refugees: stagnant economies, security threats, land disputes, and the continuing exercise of power by elements hostile to them.

70.   The starting point for IDPs, however, is a place of insecure refuge within the national borders. The protection regime for IDPs is far less defined from the outset than it is for returned refugees. As will be shown, uncalculated numbers of IDPs in Colombia and returned refugees and IDPs in Liberia have benefited for short periods of time from limited assistance in their places of origin and, finding the assistance and livelihood opportunities inadequate, have departed from those places.

71.   Front and centre among the rights of the refugees who return to their homelands and IDPs who have been forcibly uprooted, is the right to recover and return to their original homes (or a close substitute) and to recover their land. There is an assumption with regard to returning refugees and IDPs, similar to that concerning former combatants, that well formulated community based assistance will facilitate the reintegration of the uprooted while revitalizing citizen participation and reviving rural development. The community orientation undoubtedly improves the impacts of humanitarian actions and facilitates economic revitalization and reconciliation. But, as in the example of former combatants, the formula is workable only

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[3] Vicky Tennant, 'Return and reintegration' in V. Chetail, ed, *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon,* 2009.

insofar as the returnees are embedded in communities that accept them, which is not always the case.

72.   The international recognition of refugees and the body of refugee law (the mandate of UNHCR) give refugees advantages not fully shared by internationally displaced persons, Guiding Principles notwithstanding. Refugees' comparative advantage extends for a period following repatriation, as UNHCR assists the returnees and monitors their protection.

73.   On the other hand, premature and ill-prepared repatriations (e.g., those motivated by forthcoming elections) often exacerbate problems facing refugees who are brought to insecure home communities lacking economic opportunities and services. Early repatriations to problematic locations thereby encourage renewed migration to urban centers. Large numbers of refugee and IDP returnees live in extreme poverty in their original homes, in urban slums or divided between both.

74.   Colombia and Liberia offer illustrations in this direction. The same occurs when IDPs return prematurely to communities that lack security and resources. If the resources invested in assisting refugee and IDP returns fail to produce durable solutions for them within a year or two which is when most international humanitarian actors depart, both returned refugees and IDPs are left in distress.

75.   In nearly all countries that have experienced long-term and destructive civil conflict along with high numbers of refugees and IDPs, it is difficult for all, and impossible for many, either to return to their places of origin or to find other locations where they can settle. The ability to rejoin the communities in which they lived in the past depends on security conditions, livelihood possibilities and, often most problematic of all, the ability to obtain or recover homes and property.

76.   Over and above these conditions, the returnees who have grown used to having access to higher levels of health and education for themselves and/or their children than what may be available in their communities of origin are reluctant to settle for less. The ability of returnees to be accepted in new communities is likewise problematic and the presence of newcomers may be widely resented. It is often far easier to find a place—which is not necessarily a community—in an urban setting than in a rural or semi rural village. It is easier, as well, to find employment and access to services in cities. Ultimately, the cities can and should reap benefits from the new migrants, but this requires systematic and targeted investment in favour of the newcomers.

77.   The evidence is overwhelming that post-conflict returnees, IDPs, and former combatants - for similar reasons - flock to large urban centres where neither they nor their families have previously established roots. Community based assistance in a mega-city poses decidedly different challenges than community projects situated in rural areas, and there is far less accumulated experience in urban than rural contexts among humanitarian agencies. Nevertheless, the inescapable reality is that major cities in nearly every country that has experienced civil conflict have expanded rapidly and without planning. The expansion is well beyond what would have been the case given a normal rural-urban migration pattern.[4]

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[4] For example, Kabul's population increased from 1.5 million to 4.5 million between 2001 and 2008, During the conflict about one third of the IDPs in Iraq concentrated in slums in the larger cities across the country. As elaborated

The role of international support

78.   In contemporary peace agreements the language calls for international bodies involved in peace making and peacebuilding to underwrite a wide agenda of social, economic and security assistance, including resources for reintegration and assistance in the return of refugees and IDPs. A number of peace agreements reference the need for international actors to furnish technical and financial support to facilitate compliance with material requirements of IDP and refugee return and local settlement options.[5] For example Guatemala's 1990 peace agreement and the South Sudan agreement of 2002:

> The Parties recognize that the series of tasks relating to the resettlement of the uprooted population is of such breadth and complexity that the strong support of the international community is needed in order to complement the domestic efforts of the government and of the various sectors of civil society. Otherwise, the government's commitment would be limited by financial constraints. [6]

> There shall be established a Southern Sudan Reconstruction and Development Fund (SSRDF) to solicit, raise and collect funds from domestic and international donor and disburse such funds for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the South, for the resettlement and reintegration of internally and externally displaced persons.[7]

79.   International agencies are actively engaged on every front. Donor governments answer emergency appeals from UN agencies, albeit inadequately in all too many cases. Non-government organizations use government and private funds to mount health, education, water and sanitation and social infrastructure projects, to directly assist vulnerable groups and to engage in peacebuilding exercises in multiple venues.

80.   Government ministries are the official interlocutors for all international entities, although they may not effectively control who is allowed to work, where and under what conditions. But, nobody - not even the government itself - claims that the latter has the capacity and funding to undertake the challenges of recovery without assistance and strengthened capacities. As underscored in the 2008 Priority Plan for Peacebuilding Fund in Liberia, jointly prepared by the UN Mission and Liberian government:

> With limited state capacity, particularly within the security and Justice sector, Liberia remains susceptible to lawlessness. Immediate threats to stability include increasing violent criminal activities, especially armed robbery and rape; limited capacity of the security sector to curb violent crime; very weak justice systems; and the existence of disaffected groups such as some unemployed and

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later in this report, Monrovia has grown to three times its pre-war size, while the vast majority of IDPs in Colombia have migrated to the major cities.

[5] There are examples of such language in the peace treaties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Liberia, Mozambique, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Sudan.

[6] *Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict.* Section IV, Para. 3. Retrieved from: http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/guatemala/resettlement-agreement.php

[7] *2002 Sudanese Peace Agreement* , Section 15: Reconstruction and Development Funds.1)

deactivated uniformed personnel. Developing interventions that target critical threats and address problems before they escalate is essential to maintaining the current path of progress. The security presence of UNMIL has been and will continue to be, in the near term, a crucial element of stability in Liberia....[8]

81.   Without improved capacities and enhanced resources, governments will be unable to support their citizens. Nearly all international agencies also acknowledge their responsibility to strengthen national institutions and to train local and national authorities to perform adequately after the departure of the international cadres. This resolve breaks down, however, when governments are—or are seen as—corrupt and/or lack the political will to act on behalf of national well being and vulnerable sectors.

82.   In such cases, donors prefer to bypass government ministries and, instead, rely on international and local NGOs. Donors and international agencies are similarly unwilling to rely on government-directed actions when the authorities to be involved are seen as well disposed, but incompetent and unprepared to lead. The donors may understand the need to initiate capacity building projects in such cases, but lack time and funding to do so.

83.   International humanitarian agencies take a leading role in implementing international engagements on behalf of uprooted people during the early phases of war-to-peace transitions. The 'hand-over" to government does not come about easily. International agencies could bring about smoother transitions by better phasing assistance that gradually moves from direct relief services at the outset to greater support for government institutions.

84.   Development as well as humanitarian actors have roles to play from the very beginning, but the collaboration is spotty at best. A case in point is the need for development actors in refugee returns to build the roads, plough land so it is fit for agriculture, install potable water, construct schools, etc. The tasks are urgent and development actors are absent.

85.   The great strength of the international community is its ability and, to varying degrees, willingness to stand behind war-to-peace transitions. The well-recognized, much lamented but seemingly irresolvable problem is that the international agencies engaged in early recovery tend not to stay the course during the inevitably long transition so that their worthwhile initiatives prove sustainable.

86.   International assistance tends to diminish at the point that emergency needs evolve into chronic inadequacies that are institutionally based and require multifaceted, coordinated national, regional and local responses. A second weakness is the inability or unwillingness to build on and strengthen existing local capacities, weakened by conflict but still intact. Examining humanitarian assistance and capacity building in East Africa, Monica Juma and Astri Suhrke conclude:

> ...practice was driven by one basic assumption: international actors had capacity and were, therefore, the capacity builders, while local actors were recipients of

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[8] *Priority Plan for Peacebuilding Fund, Liberia 2008*, p. 3.

capacity. This categorization had immediate impact on the manner in which building capacity was conceived.[9]

87.   Do returning refugees, former IDPs and former combatants become productive citizens when they find a place to settle? Most assuredly yes, but this author has yet to find a systematic examination of returnee well-being that looks at the integration phenomenon over a period of years (as opposed to assessing the immediate impacts of narrowly targeted projects). Peace agreements specify that IDPs and returnee rights must be respected, but implementation and monitoring are problematic.

88.   The major peacekeeping missions are understandably more preoccupied with what the recently disarmed combatants are doing. While civilian well being is on their agenda, it is considered a problem that can be addressed later—and one that is primarily the responsibility of government planning. Ongoing linkages between the Human Rights components of UN Missions and UNHCR are not as strong as they are supposed to be, so the refugees and especially the IDPs tend to fall through the cracks with regard to international oversight and protection.

89.   The case studies that follow discuss how two countries are dealing with the vast numbers of uprooted people in their population. They share common challenges, which are also shared with several countries across the globe experiencing war-to-peace transitions and large unsettled populations. The menu of integration is daunting.

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[9] *Eroding Local Capacity, International Humanitarian Action in Africa,* Monica Kathina Juma and Astri Suhrke, eds., Nordiska Afrikainstitute, 2002, p.164.

Colombia

90.   Colombia's internally displaced population of four to five million people constitutes a continuing humanitarian emergency, which will persist so long as there is ongoing conflict, insurgent and criminal land grabs, uncontrolled drug trafficking and the absence of rule of law. When families are forcibly displaced by violence, they are eligible to register with the Colombian government and receive three months of emergency assistance, sometimes more.

91.   When the emergency humanitarian assistance ends, the IDPs are eligible for what is called stabilization assistance, which is supposed to lead to self reliance. Several government ministries, national and local organizations and internationally supported programmes are charged to contribute to the technical and economic support for IDP integration. Colombian and international law and the Constitutional Court decisions have called upon state and local institutional entities to engage in actions that support the following general principles:

- Protection and security;
- Socio-economic recovery with access to employment and social services;
- Political and social participation and full rights;
- Restitution/compensation.

92.   Policies vary for rural or urban settings and with reference to gender, age and the abilities of the individuals and families in question. Unfortunately, the implementation of the Colombia's advanced legislation thus far has lagged well behind its theoretical promise and institutional mandates.

Perpetrators of displacement

93.   The current iteration of the Colombian conflict involves two rebel insurgent groups: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the smaller National Liberation Army (ELN), a decentralized grouping of militias formerly called paramilitaries who are still active and referred to as criminal bands, and the Colombian armed forces. The list of perpetrators of displacement is not complete without noting the power and influence of the drug trade which incorporates elements from all sides of the struggle and profits from conflict and displacement.

94.   Displacement soared during the mid-1990s and peaked in the early years of the present century. Although the victims are and have remained rural in origin, the patterns and character of displacement have evolved. IDPs initially came from sparsely populated parts of Colombia where government presence was extremely weak, but since the late 1990s they have been fleeing from some of the most productive areas of the country.

95.   Displacement increased in the 1990s while armed bands, government forces and insurgents fought for land and control. Displacement increased more sharply as these armed groups allied themselves lucratively to the coca producers and processors. The Colombian Programme for Land Protection and Property of the Displaced Population PPTP has reported

some eight million hectares of land, approximately 280,000 separate holdings, to have been lost due to displacement, affecting about 40 per cent of the rural population.[10]

96.   Among IDPs, 90 per cent of households surveyed by the Commission to Monitor Public Policy on Forced Displacement claimed they abandoned their land due to direct threats. Much of the land traditionally in the domain of the country's Afro-Colombia's and indigenous ethnic minorities has been and is being acquired by force and used for high market value commercial crops rather than coca cultivation.

97.   Government forces have reduced the number of rebel insurgents overall, but the FARC is still able to recruit new members. The former armed paramilitary units have formally demobilized, but persist in different organizational arrangements and hold power in the areas where they have long been a force. Demobilization has not affected the criminal ties between the former militias (or the FARC) and the narcotics trade. A number (debated) of the former paramilitary units have regrouped as armed criminal bands; *bacrim* is the current term used.

98.   The FARC, albeit weakened, can and does threaten peasants who do not co-operate, and it coerces and forcibly recruits civilians, who flee to avoid this outcome. Rural Colombians are continuingly and increasingly victims of coercive land grabs that particularly affect indigenous groups and Afro-Colombians. Both disbanded paramilitaries and FARC operatives intimidate IDP leaders and activists, many of whom have sought refuge in Colombia's major cities.

99.   The government, on its side, can point to the combined effects of military push backs and demobilization which have improved security generally in Colombia and significantly reduced the large collective displacements caused by combat and armed attacks on communities. Those displaced in recent years are likely to be individuals and families who have suffered threats and reprisals, rather than entire communities. Nobody refutes that conflict, threats, and violence are still widespread and deadly. Small land holders fear being displaced and already displaced persons in communities across the country are not secure from reprisals.

100.   Land grabs, recruitment and threats persist as much or more than ever. The land grabs are primarily to secure places for the cultivation of narcotics, more than in previous years land is seized for commercial cultivation--especially for palm oil—which disproportionately affects the small holdings of ethnic minorities. For these reasons, displacement and multiple displacements persist year after year, and though somewhat reduced, are still appallingly high.

101.   Yet, while on the one hand, conflict induced displacement is ongoing, programmes to integrate the uprooted, to support the restitution of property and the compensation of victims, and to facilitate return are also increasingly on the national and international agendas. The two phenomena obviously are contradictory. As long as the former persists, the latter will be impeded, but the integration process is buttressed by judicial and legislative actions, along with growing technical expertise and greater political will. Integration efforts have shown signs of success in places where conflict is not present; they can prove more sustainable if adequate resources are made available, and a comprehensive approach is applied.

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[10] The PPTP is operated by the government agency for assistance to the displaced, Acción Social, in coordination with other government agencies.

Governmental responses to conflict

102. Peace efforts with the insurgents have floundered, due largely to lack of political will on all sides and profound distrust. They may be renewed under the new administration of Juan Manuel Santos.. After previous governments failed to negotiate peace with the insurgents, the government of Alvaro Uribe (2002–2010) undertook to vanquish the insurgency militarily and, as noted, has succeeded in reducing their numbers and areas of control.

103. However, the major group, the FARC, has felt no economic pressure to make peace, thanks largely to its profitable relationships with the drug trade and the ransom funds obtained from extortion and kidnappings. Financial independence and political isolation seems to have immunized the insurgents from pressure to treat the civilian population more humanely.

104. Taking a different tack with the paramilitary units, the Uribe government initiated negotiations with their leadership which agreed to demobilization and a measure of accountability for crimes in exchange for light prison sentences. Paramilitaries are entitled to reintegration benefits if they return to their communities and choose civilian lives.

105. The paramilitary units underwent collective and individual demobilizations. The president's Council for Reintegration claims that between August 2002, when the demobilization programme was initiated, and the end of March 2008, 46,913 people volunteered to participate in the DDR. Of these, according to the figures, just over 15,000 came forward as individuals, representing all varieties of armed bands, and 32.000 demobilized collectively. The DDR programme is also available to all 'illegal armed groups', i.e. paramilitary and insurgents alike. Among the individual demobilizations, these government statistics show over half to be from the FARC and ELN.

106. Colombian citizens and local authorities have questioned demobilization figures on grounds that participants did not necessarily comply with demobilization conditions and, instead, continued to work in their respective units, now referred to as criminal bands. Another reason for questioning the numbers reported to have participated in DDR programmes is that, in Colombia as in most DDR programmes, individuals have falsely affirmed membership in armed bands in order to access benefits.

107. The benefits programmes for the demobilized are not popular. First, citizens resent the DDR programme for offering benefits to ex combatants over and above other war affected groups; second local authorities criticize the government for designing the programme without municipal level participation even though the settlement aspect requires municipal collaboration. The disarmed combatants have been settled without prior community consultation. Former paramilitary leaders have demonstrated considerable influence over security of citizens (or lack thereof) and electoral results.

Legal and institutional responses to displacement

108. In 1997 the government of Colombia passed core legislation, Law 387, defining government obligations toward IDPs and establishing continuing forms of governmental support for IDPs from the initial forced displacement through socioeconomic stabilization and

justice. Law 387 includes the full range of socio-economic assistance and protection. The law recognizes the right of Colombians displaced by violence to be supported in their places of refuge or to return to their places of origin and/or to be compensated for their losses.

109. Registered IDPs are eligible for programmes supported by the government and for public services in their places of refuge; they are supposed to be protected in their return communities and elsewhere. The law has its institutional expression in a National System of Integrated Attention to People Displaced by Violence (the Spanish acronym is SNAIPD), encompassing all institutions that provide services for IDPs. A Presidential agency, Acción Social, coordinates government programmes.

110. Initially Acción Social had an essentially humanitarian role, to provide relief for those displaced by violence and to assist them with their return. Because violence and displacement persisted and grew, Acción Social's functions expanded to encompass the prevention of displacement, management of the IDP Unified Registry of displaced persons, stabilization projects and returns to places of origin. In monetary terms, humanitarian assistance still absorbs by far the major portion of government IDP assistance. The government estimated the number of registered IDPs as of July 2010 at 3,456,305, according to the Ministry of Planning. Other respected sources, not limiting their estimates to registered IDPs calculate them to range between four and five million.

111. An important limiting factor of government assistance to IDPs is that benefits from Acción Social are available only to the IDPs who are counted in the Unified Registry which it manages. As noted, the Registry limits the IDPs coverage to those who can meet a fairly narrow definition. For a wide variety of reasons, a large number of IDPs who might meet this definition have not registered. Sometimes they are denied access, sometimes they fear reprisals if their situation were to become known, and sometimes they apply after too long a time has lapsed.

112. Although the conditions for registration have been made more flexible in recent years, IDP numbers are under-counted.[11] There are financial implications for the municipalities where they reside. If the State does not reimburse the municipalities for unregistered IDP services, the former can only address these needs through the limited programmes for the poor. All the local municipalities with large IDP populations experience a major burden on their meagre resources. It is hardly surprising when municipal and departmental authorities prove less than welcoming. Nevertheless, as will be described below, several receptor municipalities have exceeded expectations in their efforts to incorporate the IDP population thrust upon them.

Displacement and Colombia's security strategies

113. If displacement is the result of persistent conflict and the impunity of armed bands, the drug trade and those who profit from both, it stands to reason that achieving peace in Colombia (whether by negotiation or force) and putting an end to the production and sale of illicit substances would remove the reasons for displacement and enable those already displaced to return. Yet, the short-term effects of pursuing security and combating the economy of drugs

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[11] The discrepancy is widely acknowledged. Donors and NGOs calculate beneficiary numbers on other, larger estimates, except when projects are directly operated by the government.

have proved often to be contrary to these objectives. The contradiction is all too evident: Achieving peace and security is ultimately the *sine qua non* for ending displacement. But, attempts to militarily defeat armed insurgents and end coca production so as to increase national security create the potential for more displacement. The dynamics are the following:

114. The government has created Centers for Coordination of Integrated Action (CCAI) and has carved out five strategic corridors in the most conflictive parts of the country where integrated military-civilian programmes have been elaborated. The actions of military forces are meant to be coordinated with moves toward civilian governance in these corridors, in a similar pattern to the 'clear, hold and build' models used elsewhere:

- Security forces militarily defeat the insurgents;
- At the same time, military and civilians together eradicate the cultivation of coca and other illicit substances - primarily by blanket fumigation - thereby removing narcotics as a source of income;
- As these efforts near completion, the military presence should be reduced and government services brought to the areas;
- Resources are devoted to supporting effective civilian government in the areas;
- Resources are also channeled to supporting legal production and economically viable enterprises. Internationally, this plan has been most fully supported by the United States. In practice, thus far, instead of removing the threats that cause displacement and creating a political and economic environment to which IDPs can return.

115. The intensive use of aerial fumigation of illicit crops has also destroyed legal crops, which has caused some people to lose their livelihoods and leave. This is partly due to the fact that aerial fumigation is not precise, but it is also due to the economic strategies of the peasant population. Small cultivators, who want to move to legal crops and take steps in that direction, will nonetheless usually keep growing some coca amongst their other crops in order to guarantee themselves some income in the transition. Manual eradication largely avoids the negative outcomes, but the military prefers the aerial fumigation because of cost and time saved. In either case, when a long time elapses between eradication and the creation of economic alternatives, the substitution mechanisms are not viable.

116. When coca was reduced in Putumayo, it increased in Tumaco and conditions in Tumaco seriously deteriorated. Armed groups have been drawn in and the population suffers increasing levels of insecurity. Tumaco served as an important destination for IDPs for years, but as coca cultivation and the drug trade moved there and intensified, the number of displacements both arriving in Tumaco and fleeing from the department sharply increased.

117. Military efforts to identify and defeat insurgents depend on cooperation from local residents. When local residents are seen to be cooperating with the military, or other 'enemies' of the insurgents, they suffer serious reprisals. At the same time insurgents, armed gangs and drug lords force local residents to assist them materially. This in turn leads to military reprisals against local people for aiding the enemy. In response, families flee.

118. These are the insecurities that derive from the state of conflict in which Colombia remains. It is possible, albeit difficult, for the strategy described above to succeed. Operations in the Department of Meta - an area called La Macarena, a zone with little government presence and

considerable violence - have been undertaken with no resources spared. The insurgency reportedly has been defeated, the illicit crops have been or are being replaced with legal products, and government services are available. Local officials are collaborating with this 'Integrated Consolidated Programme' and the Central government is supporting local initiatives to integrate and accommodate the population. The Macarena programme is still considered a pilot, however. It is costly to maintain in both monetary and human terms. The long-term results remain to be seen.

119. Displaced persons see their security undermined, as well, from the loss of social networks and community. Living, as most do, in poor neighbourhoods where crime rates are high and delinquency commonplace, even among their own children, the IDPs have limited options for support. To their credit, the IDPs themselves and several national and international NGOs have encouraged the creation of mutual support groups, e.g. for women, handicapped people, youth.

120. The IDPs have established organizations of their own to defend their rights and speak on their behalf. These organizations are not necessarily representative. Indeed, female IDPs have found it necessary to form their own organizations in order to have a voice in the policy process. IDP leaders have been prime targets of assassinations by armed groups. Ultimately, the rulings of Colombia's Constitutional Court have been the major factor in affirming IDP rights. Indeed in 2004, a Court ruling, T-025, declared the government to have violated its constitutional obligations by failing to comply with the measures elaborated in Law 387 (1997).

121. The most significant boost to possible reintegration are two new laws passed in 2011 and as of June 2011, consolidated into a single piece of legislation: the Victims and Land Restitution Law (La Ley 1448 de 2011 de Víctimas y de Restitución de Tierras), dedicated to restitution of illegally acquired property and compensation to victims for crimes by insurgents, the paramilitary and the state. This legislation commits the state to address the crimes that produced displacement in the past. The consolidated law is of fundamental importance not only in settling past injustices of land seizures, but in making it potentially possible for the displaced to return to their places of origin and reclaim property.

122. The Victims Law gives force and substance to judicial remedies against human rights violators connected to the armed parties in the ongoing conflict, (but it does not address the continuing high level of what now is deemed 'criminal' violence, even when undertaken by the same groups). Without a doubt, if land and property are restored and victims of human rights violations compensated, the country will have taken a major step toward justice and future security. The test will come with implementation and enforcement. Unfortunately, claimants already have been assassinated and many fear they will be victimized as well for upholding the tenets of the Land Law or for claiming their just reparations.

123. Prior to the passage of the Victims/Land Law in 2011, only about three per cent of IDPs expressed the intention to return, according to surveys conducted by the Commission to Monitor Public Policy on Forced Displacement. The IDPs interviewed by this author in 2010 and numerous other observers concurred in citing insecurity as a major reason why IDPs reject return as an option. Reportedly, IDPs interviewees continue to recount having returned to places of origin with government accompaniment and receiving threats that cause them to leave again. This is an especially frequent phenomenon among indigenous communities, for whom their places of origin are of vital cultural and economic importance.

124. Although they have been displaced several times, they still continue to return collectively, only to be expelled by force again. Their land has high commercial value. The national territory outside of their lands has little meaning and the integrity of their community is all-important. They do not tend to see integration in mainstream Colombian society as an attractive option. Thus far the government security forces have not effectively prevented the forcible seizure of lands held by indigenous and Afro-Colombians

125. Successful returns have long been underway, albeit in relatively small numbers, to areas that are conflict free and relatively secure -- where land can be accessed or recovered, and where the population is otherwise stable. Returns to the security corridors are beginning to take place as well, thanks to apparent progress in achieving stabilization. They will grow if these areas remain stable, if civilian governance proves effective and if the land laws permit people to recover and keep properties stolen from them. Government forces will have to remain long enough to protect returnees and their properties. Returns to areas where insurgents and/or drug related bands hold power is by definition problematic.

126. Present insecurity takes different forms for returnees. Former members of armed paramilitary groups still exercise considerable control in some of rural towns, so that, even in the absence of overt conflict, returnees often face threats and reprisals for past actions. IDPs report having returned to places of origin at moments of calm, but again being forcibly displaced because of pressures to collaborate with armed elements or allow their children to be recruited or sexual violence. As for their property, newly returned IDPs have been subjected to pressure to surrender their land, which may be their own or other land they were given to farm.

Venues of stabilization

127. While IDPs in Colombia include relatively successful farmers, small ranchers, traders and artisans, most who have fled were poor subsistence farmers or agricultural wage labourers. The newly displaced go first to small municipalities, but typically leave after a relatively short time because of the lack of economic opportunities. They try their luck in larger cities, where they have few contacts and limited relevant experience. It is very difficult for IDPs to find steady wage employment in cities so they earn what they can in the informal sectors. Donors have favoured income generation activities that foster individual entrepreneurial initiative.

128. One hears urgent pleas for land among former farmers now eking out a subsistence living in cities. They do not necessarily demand the land they had to forcibly flee - though that may be their aspiration - but at least a place they can farm and produce food to feed their families and to sell. Parcels of land are frequently available for farming, often on the periphery of towns and cities on state owned land and unused. IDPs sometimes are settled in such places and, in the best of scenarios, they receive subsidies and credits for a period of time, and agricultural tools assistance with marketing. If assistance is well sequenced, the farmers will be able to achieve food security for themselves and to work with the community for collective benefits. Wider export of crop production theoretically could profitably follow.

129. In the worst of circumstances, IDPs are allowed to settle on private land and to work it, only to have it reclaimed once it has become productive. Resettlement projects that could help IDPs settle on government or private land are managed, through Acción Social, by the

Colombian Institute of Rural Development, INCODER, which is also responsible for registering the land that has been abandoned by the IDPs. INCODER hitherto has been chronically underfunded, notoriously corrupt, and largely unresponsive to IDP pleas for resettlement land. NGOs and donor programmes furnish inputs and subsidies that may result in better outcomes for a few rural resettlement projects.

130.   NGO initiatives and self help among threatened communities have led to the creation of rural collectives of various sorts. There are peace collectives, women's collectives and self-governed villages where people who have lost their original homes are coming together to farm and subsist in peace. Such initiatives are small but very important to the survival of those participating. They are permanently at risk, however, because if armed bands, powerful drug dealers or well connected commercial interests want to take the land away, it is hard to protect either the land or the people on it.

131.   Other rural options are for the IDPs themselves to produce export products that are sold to commercial enterprises, or to work directly as wage labourers on plantations, especially on fast growing palm oil holdings. Not infrequently, the palm oil and similar plantations represent the consolidated holdings of several small farmers whose land has been purchased at low prices or simply seized by large corporate owners. The risk is that these options prove exploitative, temporary, or both.

132.   Indigenous and Afro-Colombian farmers, whose land is rarely titled, struggle to resist succumbing to the option of wage labour. These groups are more reluctant than the general population to separate themselves from their tribe, culture and collective land to settle elsewhere, even under favourable conditions. They are exceptionally vulnerable upon displacement precisely because they strive continually and against all odds to resist any of the armed actors and to recover what they lost, but often end up worse off for their efforts. Yet, one well managed resettlement/reintegration project brought to the attention of the author in early 2010 illustrated the possibility of positive outcomes for tribal communities that have lost collective land.

133.   In a visit to the community of La Dorada, near the town of El Dovio in the Department of Valle del Cauca, the survivors of a forcibly displaced indigenous community were living, as an intact community, on a plot of privately donated land. They farmed and were able to produce a small amount of surplus for sale, and were not only surviving, they acknowledged, but doing somewhat better than prior to their expulsion. The women reported that their children were healthier and the general living conditions were better and wanted to maintain their present advantages.

134.   The International Organization for Migration had worked with the indigenous leaders, doctors and nutritionists to develop a diet that incorporated traditional elements with added nutritional components, and joined health and nutritional projects. Schooling was made available as well, and was attracting adults as well as children. While the situation was relatively promising, future prospects were less so. The amount of land currently available is entirely insufficient for continuing cultivation by a growing community, leaving open the fate of the coming generation.

135.   The land the government gives to IDPs is generally marginal and far from roads and trade routes, making market access a serious obstacle. Successful income generation is directly tied to local infrastructure. Absent passable roads or vehicles that can transport goods to market, products produced in homes or grown will lack buyers, and the producers will lack income. Deteriorating infrastructure is an outcome of conflict. In Colombia income-strapped departments and municipalities, even if they are no longer conflictive, lack adequate resources to repair tertiary roads and bridges, build holding facilities, and so on.

136.   Credit is another frequent obstacle, unless it is part of a donor supported IDP income generation project. Given the obstacles to cultivating marketable legal products and the degree of coercion from drug lords and their allies, peasants across the country have been cultivating illegal substances, primarily coca. Incomes are higher and marketing is not a problem as the buyers are prepared to collect the product directly.

137.   One woman interviewed in Soacha (on the outskirts of Bogota) in 2006 reported that while she was able to find low salary but steady work in the city, her husband had left the family to cultivate coca on the remaining family land. Needless to say, fumigation or police and military action from the government side as well as violence and force on the supplier-purchaser side, are deterrents to cultivating coca. It is the lack of economically viable legal options rather than a preference for illegal ones that predominates.

138.   The current government is now investing more vigorously in infrastructure improvement, including farm to market roads, for all the above reasons. Balanced infrastructural improvements will make it possible for presently isolated communities to grow economically. If this comes to pass, such communities, still tied to agrarian lifestyles, could become attractive alternatives for IDPs who cannot, or prefer not, to return to their homes, and who cannot adjust to large cities. Likewise, for poor farmers generally, whether returnees or not, dynamic market towns and trading hubs may be able serve as places where family members can earn wages that supplement inadequate farming proceeds.

Urban alternatives

139.   The vast majority of the IDPs, unable to find rurally based solutions, have made their way to cities and towns, ill-prepared for urban life and looking for employment far removed from their rural origins. Not only have they arrived lacking useful skills for their new contexts, but are unaccustomed to the discipline and routines of daily salaried labour. Policy attention and resources for the departmental and municipal level mechanisms on which IDP services depend have been dismally inadequate.

140.   Here it is difficult to find the right balance: When municipalities are controlled by drug traffickers, it is obviously not helpful to IDPs to channel resources through the political leadership. Yet, it should be possible to respond to municipal leaders who demonstrate willingness to incorporate the IDPs and to use resources on behalf of inclusive municipal development.

141.   Actual jobs are difficult to find in Colombia for unskilled labour, which is abundant. The official unemployment rate in the country, as of January 2010 was 14.6 per cent, but real

unemployment is surely higher, due to the prevalence of informal labour. Planning Ministry calculations show less poverty overall in urban than in rural areas. But the information is qualified by indictors of extreme poverty persisting in urban areas, especially among new arrivals, and growing disparities in income both in urban and rural areas.

142.	Overall, it has proven more difficult for men than for women to find paid work. Women are likely to find work in domestic service or performing home-based tasks similar to what they are used to doing. On the other hand the salaries are extremely low and they have no bargaining power. The women, especially single women, are vulnerable to sexual abuse and lack the mobility of men because of their responsibilities to care for children. In Colombia, as nearly everywhere, micro-credit programmes report that women constitute the majority of their clients and have proved more reliable than the men.

143.	Donors and NGOs have supported income generation in urban areas primarily by making funding available to individual families who are supposed to establish small scale enterprises in their homes and sell the product. For reasons related to skill levels, business inexperience, difficult market access and low income levels among would-be customers, these enterprises are at high risk of failure. If they do fail, the IDPs also risk losing the homes for which they can no longer pay. No need is more critical for the newly urbanized IDPs than income generation opportunities. This goal should be pursued in the broader context of municipal development.

144.	From its Bogota headquarters, Acción Social coordinates a wide range of government institutions located in urban areas that make it possible for the IDPs to gain access to health care, education, psychosocial counselling and subsidies for housing. These have been improved over the years in response to the pressure on the government to comply with the rulings Constitutional Court, and thanks to donor contributions. While IDPs used to face major bureaucratic hurdles to gain access to social services in localities different than their places of origin, problems of access now have been largely solved, at least for registered IDPs.

145.	Nevertheless, IDPs are more vulnerable than others because they often are unaware of their rights to assistance or where to seek it; they may not be made to feel welcome; they sometimes cannot afford school uniforms and supplies or basic medications. Another factor that interferes with their access to service is their involuntary mobility from one to another community, and within cities. So, for example, children enter school after years of seeking a place to settle, find themselves much older than their classmates and leave again before the school year is over. Or, health issues go unattended and inconsistently treated. Psychosocial attention is everywhere inadequate.

146.	The availability of needed services and the quality of the services are widely varied but generally poor. The best tend to be private and donor initiated. It is no surprise that poorer localities recently subject to conflict and now facing large numbers of newly-arrived destitute people, are not well equipped in the service sector. What can be said is that health and educational services are present in virtually all medium and even small cities, which is not the case in rural areas. For Colombians, as for IDPs in other parts of the world, the presence or absence of these services is extremely important in their choices of places to live. However battered the institutions in urban municipalities, they have become hubs for many IDPs precisely because they offer some level of education and health services.

147.   To be sure, as the land laws are implemented more IDP will return. Even if the land laws are successfully implemented, however, a significant portion of the IDPs who have settled in cities will remain in urban settings. The combination of extreme poverty and growing numbers of IDPs severely taxes health, education, and sanitation services, as well as transportation, electricity and water resources. Among residents and officials who are not sympathetic to the newcomers, IDPs are widely associated with increased crime and social tensions.

148.   The Colombian Constitutional Court has insisted that municipalities and departmental authorities must establish institutional capacities to address IDP needs, but the central government has only recently begun to enhance the administrative capacities of mayors and governors. When IDPs who arrive are not registered and therefore receive no assistance, the municipalities are even more hard-pressed to meet their basic responsibilities. Budgetary allocations still are highly centralized and communications from local institutions to national are poorly articulated.

149.   While there is no doubt that structures of governance and service delivery in some towns and cities are beyond repair due to corruption and their leaders' affiliations with perpetrators of violence, leaders in many municipalities would use—and have used--added resources to improve the services they offer to their citizens. There is growing recognition among Colombian policy makers and donors that meeting the needs of IDPs requires close collaboration between national institutions at both central and local levels. It is instructive to look at a range of cities in Colombia where large IDP populations have settled.

150.   The cities receiving the greatest number of IDPs are the two largest, the metropolitan areas of Bogota (population 8,566,926) and Medellin (population 3,831,000), where the IDP population occupies areas the size of a small city. In these and the other major cities that have received large numbers of IDPs, conditions, on the whole, are deplorable. IDP unemployment or under employment is high, employment prospects are uniformly dismal, and the quality of services is mixed. In all respects, however, living conditions and services are better in larger cities than in smaller towns or rural settings. Moreover, the IDP population is better organized and more likely to have contact with Colombian civil society.

151.   The IDP projects with donor funding and support from the widespread church based networks are more limited in rural areas and smaller urban centers than in the larger metropolitan areas. Likewise, the human rights groups, university students and professors, women's organizations and similar organizations that support IDPs are more numerous and operate more easily in the larger cities than in the smaller municipalities where security is likely to be weaker. The IDP population in the large metropolitan areas is not necessarily safe, however, and IDPs must often change locations when members of the families are threatened or cannot find livelihoods. To the extent these continuing moves are the result of violence and threats, they constitute further instances of forced displacement.

152.   The table below shows the population pressures created by the expulsion and reception of IDPs to be highest in the much smaller cities, such as Quibdo, Turbo, Sincelejo, and Florencia, cities that have experienced years of conflict and displacement of their own populations. All the urban municipalities where IDPs are concentrated must strain to provide health and education, water and sanitation, and to maintain security for the expanded population. Nevertheless the smaller and medium-sized communities, with far fewer resources to absorb IDPs, have

experienced the largest impact from IDP arrivals due to absolute numbers, levels of poverty, inadequacy of existing services and weak institutions.

City	Number of people	Population pressure
Bogotá, D.C.	287,242	3.9%
Medellín	182,997	7.8%
Santa Marta	137,404	30.7%
Sincelejo	86,864	33.9%
Cali	73,518	3.3%
Buenaventura	72,631	20.0%
Valledupar	70,427	17.5%
Villavicencio	68,853	16.0%
Cartagena	65,783	7.0%
Florencia	64,603	41.0%
Turbo	54,295	38.9%
Popayán	54,037	20.3%
Barranquilla	53,813	4.5%
Cúcuta	53,652	8.7%
Quibdó	52,945	46.2%

Source: RUPD (Registry of Urban Displaced Persons) July 31, 2010

153. The small departments and municipalities are more often than not politically precarious, bureaucratically nepotistic and resource poor. They lack the basic information structures that could help to better address IDP problems. Likewise they receive too little support from the central government despite the latter's commitment to decentralization. Local authorities maintain that decentralization means more responsibility without the needed resources. In some cases, it appears, there are resources to be accessed, but the local authorities do not have the capacity or adequate information to access them.

154. Thus far, international organizations and NGOs have invested only in a few small humanitarian projects in the smaller cities, especially those in conflict areas. Development actors by and large do not invest in these places. Yet, for many reasons, as this paper will contend, small and middle-sized cities offer as great or greater potential than the large metropolitan areas for integrating IDPs. And, if IDPs are able to remain, they may eventually become economic motors of future growth and productivity in these long neglected urban venues.

155. The middle-sized city of Florencia where IDP numbers are particularly high compared to the stable population is an example. It is the capital of Caquetá Department with a population of about 160,000. This city and the Department have been at the epicentre of violence, crime, corruption and drugs. Because the city has removed its formerly corrupt leadership and is making progress in restoring rule of law, it has attracted growing numbers of IDPs, many of whom have fled from elsewhere in Caquetá. Acción Social figures indicate that one-third of the population of Florencia is comprised of IDPs, and both the Mayor of Florencia and Caquetá's Acting Governor confirmed that the IDPs continue to arrive without resources, and that few IDPs leave. Florencia has virtually no jobs for them.

156. Education and health benefits are open to IDPs, and municipal officials coordinate with Acción Social. But Florencia is unable to meet the service needs of the larger citizenry. Outside resources from donors are limited, with USAID being the only serious donor as of early 2010. USAID is buttressing educational and health services to an extent, and funding housing developments. A quarter of the city's population is destitute and well over half lives in poverty.

157. Military operations in Caquetá succeeded in reducing the level of conflict and improving the quality of governance, but the Mayor reported sheltering some 150 IDP children whose parents believed them to be in danger of forced recruitment. The Mayor and municipal officials overseeing education, health, and public services agree that the IDP population is there to stay, hence municipal planning has to take them into account, insecure as the city still remains and meagre as the resource base may be. The IDPs are interacting more with municipal authorities and being heard.

158. The town of Sincelejo in the Department of Sucre is similarly poorly resourced and less encouraging. The city (population approximately 261,000) was under the control of paramilitaries until a short time ago and remains an important centre of narcotics production and transport. Its response to the IDPs within the municipality has been minimal. The IDPs are entitled to government assistance but local institutions in Sincelejo have channelled this assistance to only 2 per cent of the estimated 18,000 registered IDPs.

159. The number of IDPs trying to register in Sincelejo has been growing in the past year, (due to an erroneous assumption that IDP benefits are readily available), but with poor success because local coordinating mechanisms operating under Acción Social barely function. Although schools are open to IDP children and they receive school breakfasts, there is a serious shortage of teachers. The IDP children are doing badly in educational terms reportedly due to depression and frustrations. Health care is present, but there is a serious unmet need for psychosocial counselling. Urban land is severely limited. The Mayor and other municipal authorities have no coherent strategy and have made little effort to incorporate the IDPs.

160. IDPs continue to enter these and several other problematic towns. Both they and the city authorities are hard pressed to cope with the multiple problems that arise. The political will of the authorities in Florencia contrasts with the apparently minimal effort and lack of coordination among authorities in Sincelejo. Given the official willingness in Florencia to absorb IDPs and the improved (if far from good) security, integration efforts could be made considerably more successful by furnishing more resources and by promoting greater economic activity in the Department.

161. In Sincelejo, greater resources will have a positive impact only if the institutional responses are better coordinated, generally improved, and brought into better compliance with national law regarding IDPs. The long-term balance sheet regarding IDP integration in Florencia and Sincelejo may become more promising as a consequence of the above mentioned Victims Land Laws, but these towns still will have a residue of IDPs who eventually can and should be absorbed and accepted as citizens.

162. A final example of the potential of urban integration is the case of Cúcuta (population approximately 721,400). The city is found near the Venezuelan border in the Department of Norte de Santander. The area suffered both from conflict and from the near elimination of trade

and commerce between Colombia and Venezuela due to growing political hostilities between the two nations. The trade had been an important source of regional prosperity and its loss caused a general economic decline. With a new government in Colombia, relations have significantly improved and the border is again open to trade and commerce. Moreover, whereas violence and displacement have been serious problems, security has been largely restored over much of the region in the past years.

163. The city of Cúcuta and the smaller nearby town of Tibú had formerly been controlled by paramilitary groups or FARC, but by January 2010 when the author visited, this no longer was the case. The present local officials, as well as international assistance organizations and IDPs themselves uniformly maintained that IDPs wanted to remain in these locations and significant numbers were finding means to earn their livelihoods there, thanks to international assistance, national mechanisms for IDP support and local solidarity. Economically the area was slowly recovering and early in 2010 everyone agreed that if hostilities between Colombia and Venezuela declined (as now appears to be well underway), the border area was likely to recover a good measure of its former dynamic trade and commercial activities.

164. Nonetheless in 2010 the officials still complained bitterly of financial constraints they believed could easily be remedied with a more enlightened national approach and better local knowledge. While crediting the government's Centers for Co-ordination and Integrated Action, (CCAI, see above) for having improved general security, the officials in Cúcuta and Tibú strongly criticized government strategies for bypassing departmental and local officials, and not taking advantage of their superior knowledge of the region. Turning to IDP issues, they criticized Acción Social projects as fragmented and urged that national programmes take a more comprehensive approach: Assistance to IDPs required improvement in capacity building, infrastructure and, especially, better judicial institutions to enforce rule of law.

165. Referring to infrastructure, for example, an official from the Governor's office pointed to the importance of improved tertiary roads. The official argued that IDPs, returnees and long time citizens alike would continue to grow coca so long as the roads were too poor to allow them to market the legally cultivated products that most would prefer to grow. Coca, after all, did not have to be marketed; it was picked up in helicopters belonging to *cocaleros*, and the income was guaranteed. In sum, officials argued for stronger public support for middle-sized cities like Cúcuta and its surroundings because, given such support, the IDP population would be prepared to stay and the local officials would be disposed to integrate them.

166. In Colombia's policy making circles, as well as among international donors, the truth of this criticism is slowly producing results. The need to bring resources to the local level and work directly with mayors and governors is convincing, but the problem is how to make this approach work in view of the corruption and even criminal liaisons of many local officials.

167. The Court issued guidelines in December 2010 (ruling 383) asking the municipalities to present their proposed budgets for IDP subsidies to the national government so that these municipalities could obtain the funds needed, while advising the national government to rule out support for municipalities that do not channel their allocated resources to IDP needs and services. The Land Restitution and Victims Laws impose responsibilities on such local officials, and are certain to have impacts both on the officials themselves and on IDP decisions in the future.

Prospects for IDP returns under the new laws

168. The Land Restitution and Victims laws offer a long needed opportunity for IDPs who have given up on going home because their properties were seized or who postponed returns on grounds of continued insecurity and lack of socio-economic assistance. In addition to potential compensation benefits for hundreds of thousands of Colombians who can establish that they have suffered damage or human right abuses through actions of the armed parties during the conflict, the laws provide for the possible return of the millions of hectares of land that once belonged to IDPs who were forced to leave it.

169. Under previous legislation, demobilized paramilitaries and insurgents were supposed to compensate victims, but they have done so minimally thus far. The present laws do not require petitioners to establish who is responsible for the land seizures, but they do have to show themselves to have been the rightful owners of that land and to have lost it after 1991. If challenged, present land owners must be able to prove the validity of their present claims of ownership.

170. Disputes will be resolved in specially created sections of the Court. A large number of the IDPs will be eligible to take advantage of the land related benefits, thus giving them a serious opportunity to reintegrate, finally, in their places of origin. If this proves to be the case, the government will have to devote major resources to making the return migrations more durable than past returns have proved to be.

171. It is too early to predict who will return as a direct consequence of the restitution clauses in the land laws. The Afro-Colombians and indigenous groups who are probably most intent on recovering land are likely to have the greatest difficulty since much of their land has been taken over by commercial interests for high value legal crops, mainly palm oil. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian land was largely untitled and the present owners can be expected to insist on their legitimate ownership even if they forcibly took the land.

172. Women may also find it more difficult to recover land belonging to their families because titles are usually in the names of the male heads of households. Historically Colombian legal systems have discriminated against women in judicial proceedings and especially with regard to land. However, gender justice has been improving, thanks to pressures from civil society. Women have gained standing in the Victim's Law and can more easily establish the case that their flight was due to the human rights violations they suffered.

173. Reflecting the measures in the Land and Victims Laws, the Colombian government on July 1 2010 revised the guidelines for returns, originally issued in May 2006. As noted, the previous guidelines encouraged IDPs to return and sent security forces to accompany a number of returning groups to high risk areas that were, supposedly, cleared of insurgents. But the returning IDPs were left on their own within a short time and they frequently were driven out once again by violence and threats.

174. As previously described, returning Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups suffered especially grievously from lack of protection. Nor did government programmes provide the public services promised to return communities. Finally, economic prospects were dismal due

to poor infrastructure, lack of markets, and the absence of agricultural inputs and credit for returnees who came back with nothing.

175. The 2010 guidelines are much improved in the realms of safety, security and access to judicial remedies. On the one hand the document underscores the importance of voluntary return, and on the other, it gives far greater attention to the need to ensure sustainability to return movements. To enable returnees to benefit from an integrated programme, the document calls for a planning process with attention to housing, health, education, food security, psycho social attention, land claims and income generation. The guidelines are to be managed by a Technical Council (*mesa*) for integrated attention.

176. At the national level the policy is managed with a multi ministerial council for returns and resettlement (Mesa Temática de Retornos y Reubicaciones) led Acción Social and encompassing Secretariats of land, basic services, housing, income generation, prevention and protection, and a secretariat of truth, justice and reparations. Importantly, this new entity is to oversee not only return movements but the previously highly flawed resettlement projects as well. The Law of Victims and Land Restitution refers to assistance for returnees and restates the minimum requirements for government to meet.

177. How the guidelines will be implemented, whether returning IDPs will, indeed, be safe and receive integrated attention, and for how long, are unanswerable at this point. It is likely that the return movements will increase significantly, with families or parts of families trying to recover their homes.

178. It is also likely that many IDPs will seek the restoration of their properties so that they can sell them and use the funds for purposes other than a permanent return. What is important is that implementing the new laws and policies can bring closure to displacement, wherever the former IDPs choose to settle. It is equally important that these laws and policies improve enforcement of human rights and justice in ways that benefit not only IDPs but the whole society.

Effective enjoyment of rights

179. The phrase 'effective enjoyment of rights' is fundamental to what Colombians understand as the obligation of the government toward the IDP population. This phrase encapsulates the measures of Law 387 which, if fulfilled, would serve to reintegrate the IDP population up to the level of other Colombian citizens and compensating them for their losses.

180. The concept has justified what is called a 'differential focus' for assistance to IDPs. It means that for an undetermined period of time IDPs are to be given priority and to receive benefits not provided to other Colombians, even poor Colombians, in order to compensate for the deep losses the IDPs have suffered—including the denial of human rights in the course of displacement. The rights specified include: housing (and land), health, education, food, income generation, identity documents and incorporation in mechanisms of social protection.

181. There are disagreements as to how long IDPs should be entitled to differential treatment. The Constitutional Court has monitored how the government attends to IDPs and its rulings

have contended that IDPs will need special treatment until (1) they can live on their own—socio-economic stabilization; (2) their rights have been fully restored; and (3) they have received restitution of or compensation for their losses. The last two are legislatively addressed by the 2011 Land Restitution and Victims Laws.

182. Under President Alvaro Uribe, the Executive branch publicly questioned the Court's demands regarding attention to IDPs, but undertook to act in conformity with that interpretation. The Santos government has taken important steps in recognition of IDPs as victims entitled to differential rights. The arguments in favour of differential treatment contend that integration cannot be achieved because there can be no 'even playing field' between IDPs and members of the stable community among whom they live, absent the rights defined by the Court.

Integration and socioeconomic stabilization

183. Government officials have encouraged a greater emphasis on programmes through which the quality of life of the poor can be addressed in tandem with the needs of displaced persons. With this intention, the Ministry of Planning created *Red Juntos* or Joint Network, meant to overcome extreme poverty and to assist income-generation projects that benefit IDPs and poor Colombians simultaneously. Red Juntos was modified to Network for the Elimination of Extreme Poverty, UNIDOS, with somewhat expanded functions and more explicitly oriented to community development in terms of Millennium Development Goals.

184. IDP advocates criticize the approach for two related reasons: first, the documentation showing a continuing need for differential treatment in favour of IDPs in the socio-economic realm, and second, the resulting outcome of isolating socio economic stabilization (a need the IDPs share with other poor Colombians) from rights to recover from losses (which IDPs have yet to see addressed). There is general acceptance, however, on eventually linking IDP benefits to socio economic improvements in the larger community. It is also accepted that IDPs in Colombia's ethnic groups should not be treated separately from their communities.

185. The more forceful commitment of the Santos administration to uphold victims' rights, including those of the displaced, carries risks. The new legislation seems to have generated a preoccupying increase in human rights violations from the criminal perpetrators of these violations. The perpetrators, presumably, are narco-traffickers, former FARC paramilitaries FARC, and members of the state security forces, working together or separately, whose aim is to preserve both their illegal gains and their impunity from punishment. They have targeted IDP organizers, human rights advocates, labour leaders and popular leaders generally.

186. The UN Human Rights Commission is among the international bodies joining in condemnation of the murder in Medellin of a leader in the victims' and women's movements in June 2011, calling on the government to do more to protect such leaders and punish its perpetrators. Criminal activity in Medellin and throughout the country persists and those who denounce criminal actions or defend victims are at serious risk of assassination. In other words, there is good reason to question whether the government will be able to ensure the security of the people it proposes to protect.

Defining the end of displacement

187. The often cited determination of the Inter Agency Standing Committee is that displacement ends when the "displaced no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and they can enjoy their human rights without discrimination."[12] The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement affirm the "duty and responsibility" of national authorities to "create conditions, as well as provide the means, which allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country" (Principle 28.1).

188. Until recently, IDP advocates insisted, above all, on the right of IDPs to return to their places of origin. In view of the vast number of people in protracted displacement with little likelihood of returning home—as in Colombia--the emphasis has shifted more toward seeking solutions for displacement by local integration and/or resettlement rather than solely through returns to places of origin. Moreover, because returns to places of origin often present security risks and severe economic challenges, national authorities no longer consider that the simple act of returning constitutes a 'solution' for the displaced.

189. Colombian law and institutions are designed to address displacement from inception through relief, stabilization and durable solutions, as stipulated in the Guiding Principles and Colombian law. When the system for attending to displacement was put in place it was designed to attend to IDP humanitarian needs until such time as the majority could return. As it became obvious that the majority would not return, attention to IDPs focused more on stabilizing the IDP population wherever it was, so that they could survive on their own, have decent housing, and have access to the same services as other Colombians, i.e. a form of local integration.

190. The 'end of displacement' in the Colombian context can be seen in practice as that point when former IDPs have achieved legal, social and economic integration wherever they have settled. Programmes intended to stabilize the IDP population in the place they are settled do not necessarily achieve integration, however, because they are based on temporary interventions with earmarked outside funding.

191. There is a continuing tension between the directives of the Constitutional Court stipulating that so long as people are in a state of displacement they require special attention (and the status of displacement endures until all their rights have been restored) and the longstanding government positions that once IDPs have achieved socio economic stability as measured by sectoral indicators, they should not be privileged above the poor even if they still have unaddressed human rights violations. The point at which people no longer are displaced and, consequently, the State no longer has specific responsibilities related to their situation of displacement is still contested.

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[12] Brookings Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 'IASC framework on durable solutions for internally displaced persons', April 2010.

192. As has been described, the Constitutional Court's watershed decision, T-025 of 2004, declared the Colombian government to be in a state of 'unconstitutionality' with regard to the millions of IDPs it was legally bound to assist and protect under Law 387. The Court elaborated inadequacies in official attention to IDPs in socio economic assistance and with regard to restoration of rights, restitution or compensation.

193. The judgment came in response to complaints from IDPs and IDP advocates against national, departmental and municipal authorities for failing to fulfil their obligations. The Court concurred that IDP rights were being disregarded in a massive and repeated manner, that there was a large gap between the components of the law and the financial resources allocated for its execution, and that the institutional capacity of the state to execute the law was inadequate.

194. The last point is particularly important. Not only did the Court elaborate in copious detail numerous and specific state obligations in every sector, but called into question the institutional capacities of the state and the adequate functioning of the mechanisms in place to fulfil these obligations. Citing the dimensions of the problem of displacement in Colombia and the limited resources available to the State, the Court noted, public policies would require balancing priorities against resources:

> …it will not always be possible to satisfy, in a simultaneous manner and to the maximum possible level, the positive obligations imposed by all the constitutional rights of the entire displaced population…

195. The unstated implication in the Constitutional Court's decision is that the presence of responses does not in and of itself signify compliance. The fact that the government of Colombia had produced comprehensive legislation and established mechanisms to assist IDPs throughout the country is only part of what is required to address massive displacement. The state must invest adequate resources and oversight in the institutions operating at the local, department and national levels to enable effective compliance. Two Colombian researchers succinctly summarized the difference between what the government was doing and what the Court was demanding:

> The development of policies for people internally displaced by the violence in Colombia is characterized by a tension between the approach of the government, which is predominantly operational, and that of the Constitutional Court, which has championed a focus on human rights by way of jurisprudence.[13]

196. Until the present, the least effective jurisprudence favouring IDP rights related to recovering or receiving compensation for losses of property and indemnity for psychological and physical harm. The proposed remedies are now legislatively enacted into the Victims Law, whose stated objective is to restore human dignity and security and prevent repeating the violations of war.

197. The language in the Victims Law (article 67) calls for an end to "the condition of vulnerability," rather than to end the condition of displacement, as in previous formulations. It

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[13] Amelia Fernandez and Roberto Vidal Lopez, "Colombia: the end of displacement or the end of attention'? *Forced Migration Review* ,May 2003.

thereby acknowledges that IDPs may have recovered the "effective enjoyment of rights" by their own efforts, and therefore no longer be considered vulnerable or need state funded assistance. But the IDPs will not thereby lose other rights associated with their situation as a victim of displacement, i.e. the right to compensation or restitution for losses. It is obvious from the evolving criteria defining IDP rights and State responsibilities that ending displacement is a gradual process, not an event.

198. As this process unfolds, sector by sector, presumably, IDPs will be objectively less vulnerable and have diminishing needs for special attention or targeted assistance. In terms of livelihoods, IDPs are to be treated like other Colombians in terms of needs and vulnerabilities, and national policies should address their needs together. In terms of recovery of property and judicial remedies, they are still IDP victims.

199. The Victims Law belatedly addresses the question of transitional justice by placing victims at the centre of a process that demands accountability for crimes, including the crime of displacement. Displacement occurs not in general but as a result of actions of specific people that deeply harm other people. Humanitarian relief and reintegration programmes relieve the misery caused, but do not address the crime that has been committed.

Is the Colombia model transferable?

200. Is it realistic to recommend that other countries take a similar approach, strongly oriented toward enforcing legal norms and passing detailed legislation? Colombia's institutions at local levels are possibly inadequate to the tasks demanded of them by the current legislation even though human capital is very well developed and the economy is relatively healthy. Poorer countries like Liberia are far behind in terms of institutional capacities.

201. The political system in Liberia, as will be elaborated, addresses forced displacement as one of the bitter costs of war. Att this point demands for restitution are only beginning to be addressed, but not the crimes, at least not yet. Other countries can learn from Colombia's Victims and Land Restitution laws how this may be achieved.

Liberia

202. The fourteen year war in Liberia ended with a military victory over its violent warlord ruler, Charles Taylor and a power sharing agreement. The population was exhausted by conflict and overwhelmingly supported the 2003 Accra Peace Agreement. The country was physically devastated and economically destitute, and the lives of Liberia's citizens had been overwhelmingly disrupted.

203. 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.

204. 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.

205. New infrastructure dots the landscape throughout the country, from clinics to police barracks. Public services are improving but still inadequate and basic infrastructure will take a long time to build or restore. Land conflicts are prevalent and difficult to resolve, and they threaten the peace in several regions. That the still broken judicial system is not yet able to resolve these and other disputes fuels the ethnic and identity-based tensions at the heart of many of them. Nor can the judicial system adequately confront violence, rape, theft, etc. because state and local institutions are still weak.

206. Building and increasing capacities in the public sector are major priorities. Above all, poverty and unemployment exacerbate already high levels of tension and add to the frustrations of the post-conflict period. An estimated 63 per cent of the population is living at or below the poverty line. To both consolidate the peace and improve the quality of life for Liberian citizens, the government, with international help, must struggle on several fronts. Information and outreach billboards and signs abound urging Liberians to foreswear violence, rape, torture, robbery. National and international organizations offer multiple workshops on conflict management, tolerance and peace education to former combatants as well as to the citizens who have grievously suffered and lost so much.

207. As will be described, international agencies have supported efforts to reintegrate (or reinsert) demobilized combatants, while offering humanitarian assistance and public services to facilitate settling and resettling IDPs and returned refugees. The Liberian government can be credited with preserving peace, gradually strengthening institutions, improving infrastructure, and taking steps aimed at mitigating poverty. By achieving these objectives, the government maintains, Liberia will be able to find a place in the economy for the victims of conflict without ethnic or tribal discrimination.

208. Liberian policies stand in stark contrast with those in Colombia on the question of displacement. Whereas institutions in the latter are mandated to address the multiple and specific consequences of displacement and restore rights to the people who meet a determined definition of displacement, the government in Liberia considers victims of displacement (refugees, IDPs) as people who have survived a phase that has ended and who need to move forward. It now proposes to address the root causes of war and displacement through its development strategies. The priorities are to resolve youth unemployment and restore economic vitality to the Liberian countryside.

209. To speak of concern about youth unemployment, however, is to underscore the rampant unemployment of refugees whose return has been unsuccessful, still unsettled IDPs, and unskilled, violence prone former combatants. And, the inability of these groups to find adequate solutions is intimately related to lack of rural economic vitality, as will be elaborated.

210. On more than one occasion, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has urged national unification, her slogan being "One people, with one destiny, over ethnic and religious strife and Liberian history."[14] The present government believes that improved governance and economic viability will provide the means for former combatants, youth, and other Liberian citizens to productively integrate in the 'new Liberia'.

211. This author concurs with the direction the government is taking but will argue that the country must also directly address the specific problems that people face because they have been uprooted and have lost opportunities that would have enabled more productive lives. They are not only suffering as a result of the lamentable economic condition of the country, but are still struggling to come to terms with their losses and with the range of seemingly impossible obstacles in the way of reformulating their lives.

212. Virtually all Liberian officials and analysts call attention to the desperate situation faced by Liberian youth. The 'youth' about which there is so much concern, are not well defined. In terms of age, the category includes people up to the age of 35. Many of them came of age during the war feel themselves to have a stake neither in the traditional agrarian context from which they originated nor in the national political order which has taken form since the end of the conflict. Former combatants and, to a large extent, former IDPs and refugees as well, have fewer skills than others, less work discipline, and are largely unemployed. The former combatants are generally more often associated with violence.

213. Youth unemployment is reported to be at 80 per cent, although the statistic is almost meaningless since nearly everybody works in the informal sector. The implications of having a major segment of the population at productive ages working little if at all are huge and the situation is untenable for enduring peace and national progress. Securing a future for Liberia's youth has been a major preoccupation of government and non government actors throughout the country. Former combatants, in particular, are perceived to be threatening to national security and therefore a priority for attention in internationally supported training and employment generation projects.

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[14] Speech given on May 14, 2011 on National Unification Day.

214.   Liberians recruited to armed actions at an early age as well as a large portion of the people who were internally displaced for long periods of time today lack the education and basic skills they need to function of modern society. They have been uprooted in every sense of the word, and feel themselves to be excluded from formal power structures and society. Many Liberians assume that young people who are unsettled and unemployed are probably former combatants. But there are even more who were IDPs or refugees. They too severed their community roots due to years in exile or displacement.

215.   The popular image of young Liberians who are not firmly rooted in their villages or otherwise employed is of a male, rarely a female, who is not a good citizen. Other war affected and uprooted groups are also at risk: the ethnic minority tribes who lost property in their former communities, the women who were raped and lost family members in the conflict, the incapacitated, and so on. The new Liberia needs a development strategy that incorporates and addresses the special needs of the country's diverse, disrupted and uprooted social groups.

Civil war

216.   For generations, Liberia was led by elite dominated governments in Monrovia whose families were descended from the nation's Americo-Liberian founders. The ruling caste, representing less than 5 per cent of the population, was widely resented and seen as unresponsive to the needs of the predominantly rural population. In 1980 President William Tolbert was killed in a military coup led by Sergeant Samuel K. Doe. The Doe administration, in turn, sharpened ethnic tensions. The violent response to rigged elections in 1985 produced violent conflict and resulted in the arrest and execution of President Doe in 1989.

217.   The new rebel invaders, led by the Libya backed National Patriotic Front of Liberia NPFL, then engaged in an extremely bloody civil conflict between its rival leaders, Charles G. Taylor and Prince Johnson. Charles Taylor took control of the NPFL based in the central city of Gbarnga, and controlled significant parts of Liberia's heartland. Following a peace between the two NPFL leaders in 1995, Taylor managed to have himself 'elected' President in 1997. His rule was characterized by further brutality, war crimes and corruption, affecting not only Liberia but also neighbouring Sierra Leone.

218.   Between 1999 and 2003, the pro-Taylor forces were successfully challenged by two opposition armies Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, LURD and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, MODEL, but at a cost of considerable bloodshed and brutality. During both conflicts, cities, towns and rural villages were almost entirely abandoned and many were burned, as the population fled across nearby borders to Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire or else headed for more peaceful parts of the country and, especially, for Monrovia and its surrounding area.

219.   Monrovia itself was attacked in the assault against the NPFL, displacing large numbers of people who had sought safety there. Many of the people who returned to their homes when the armies from the first civil conflict had passed were forced again to leave - to the same place, a different country, or another Liberian destination during the fighting to overthrow Taylor.

220. The Accra Comprehensive Peace agreement in August 2003 brought the fighting to a close. Taylor was forced into exile and is presently before the International Court of Justice. All told the 14 years of only briefly interrupted conflict killed about 250,000 people and caused the forced displacement of over a million people. A hastily formed National Transitional Government pledged to abide by human rights, restore security, and initiate national recovery. The United Nations Mission, UNMIL, was put in place and undertook the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of combatants, with special treatment for those who were still children. In January 2006, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected President, and remains in office at this writing.

Early government responses and international assistance

221. From 2003 – 2006, Liberia was ruled by the National Transitional Government, pledged to fulfil the essential tasks dictated by the Peace agreement, but with little institutional support or authority. The new government initiated the DDR programme and encouraged peacebuilding measures, but ultimately managed to do little more than to maintain stability. This in itself may have been a significant achievement but the transition government was plagued by corruption and widely distrusted by all accounts.

222. The first priority for the Transitional Government and for the Sirleaf government, elected in 2005 and inaugurated in 2006 was rehabilitating fighters from the three rival armed groups, who were largely very young, lacking education and skills, and mostly from rural backgrounds. These mostly young ex-fighters demonstrated in numerous ways their unwillingness to accept civilian government control over their actions. The government asked the UN Mission and various NGOs to provide funding and expertise for vocational training, education in conflict management, and material resources that would prepare the ex-fighters to rejoin civilian communities.

223. Such programmes were put in place almost immediately, but the outcomes were unsatisfactory because little progress was made toward restoring Liberia to economic viability needed to offer sustainable income generation opportunities. To improve social protection of women, so many of whom had suffered grievously during the fighting, UNDP and UNMIL initiated educational programmes and institutional support. As a result, rape is been recognized as a punishable crime and Liberians across the board have acquired greater gender awareness. Yet, by all accounts, gender based violence persists widely.

224. By 2004, refugees were returning from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and other locations in the region. When the repatriation formerly ended in 2007, UNHCR had repatriated about 160,000 refugees. UNHCR continued repatriating Liberians through 2007, and after the programme formally concluded. The Liberians who found employment in their countries of exile usually remained as long as they could before repatriating. IDPs, like refugees, received UNHCR assistance packages to facilitate their return to their communities. In April 2006 the UNHCR officially closed the camps where IDPs had found refuge and terminated the relief subsidies to IDP camps. The problem of displacement, however, by no means was resolved.

225. The Transitional Government put forward an overall reintegration strategy in June 2004 to address the problem of overwhelming numbers of uprooted people, using the standard language of refugee/IDP reintegration. The document affirmed that "sustainable community reintegration of ex-combatants, returnees and IDPs remains the most preferred durable solutions." Therefore the government's objective, in keeping with international humanitarian guidelines, would be:

> To support the resettlement and reintegration of internally displaced, refugees and ex-combatants to return voluntarily, in safety, and with dignity, to their homes or habitual place of residence, or location of their choice and to strengthen their livelihood, security and promote reconciliation.[15]

226. The international community, mainly UNHCR, has had the task of re-establishing returned refugees and IDPs in their communities. The government created a Repatriation and Resettlement Commission to receive funds in support of durable solutions. The Commission was based solely in Monrovia and used its limited funds to conduct some training for returnees there. Few officials spent any time in the counties where the returnees being brought. No benefits were made available either to IDPs of returnees outside of the individual packages and community support they received from UNHCR. Returnees migrating to places other than their original communities were on their own.

227. Following her election, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf issued a Peacebuilding Priority Plan (2008) that promoted twin pillars of Liberian recovery: peacebuilding and security. Her government, with international collaboration issued the 2008 Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), which initiated a broad programme of institutional strengthening, infrastructure improvement, employment generation and measures to revive agriculture. The Liberian post-conflict programmes consciously link development and peacebuilding. Efforts to address the challenges of integrating or reintegrating Liberia's uprooted people theoretically overlap both agendas, but specific measures to this end tend to be lost among the multiple priorities associated with peacebuilding and security.

Security and stabilization

228. The threat of renewed fighting which concerned Liberian authorities and international observers at the outset is much diminished. At this point the major causes of insecurity in Liberia are similar to those encountered in numerous poor, war-affected countries: first, the bitter land disputes with strong ethnic overlays that were greatly exacerbated by the fighting and displacement patterns; second, the still unsettled and largely unemployed ex-combatants, IDPs and returned refugees who lack firm settlement options; third, the inadequate presence of state security institutions, including judicial, throughout the country.

229. Access to justice and government services is spotty, largely limited to cities, and is marred by corruption. National capacities in the judicial sector and other state institutions were never strong, but were greatly weakened by attrition borne of years of savagery during conflict and flight. They have been difficult to restore because Liberians with appropriate education and

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[15] Republic of Liberia, *Liberia Government National Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy.*

training were killed, left the country, or could no longer be trained in Liberia due to the destructions of educational institutions.

230. The security sector is slowly improving, mainly the army but the police forces as well. Nevertheless, there is little public confidence in government officials from any sector working at the local level. The lack of trust between citizens and officials, combined with the reality of low capacities among officials generally, undermines government efforts to strengthen its institutions.

231. Institutional weaknesses undermine security and are factors that make it difficult for uprooted people to reintegrate in their former communities or to find productive livelihoods elsewhere. Security forces are impeded, as well, by inadequate logistical support and poor infrastructure. Security forces and local authorities lack technical equipment and, importantly, vehicles. Thus they are neither able to effectively pursue criminals or criminal activities; nor to build public confidence and assess local problems.

International action addressing security and peacebuilding

232.   At this writing the United Nations Mission in Liberia, UNMIL, is gradually withdrawing and transferring security responsibilities to Liberian state institutions. The DDR programmes are officially over although important projects under UN and NGO auspices continue to address problems of what are considered at-risk segments of the population.

233. Gender violence is receiving national attention and has been criminalized. No longer are accusation of rape and other forms sexual based violence under the jurisdiction of the traditional male-dominated tribal leadership; special courts now try accused offenders. Civil society NGOs have received international support to defend the rights of vulnerable segments of the population.

234. The legacies of conflict and the weakness of state institutions feed ethnic tensions that sometimes erupt into confrontations. Liberia's 2011 Peacebuilding programme reports:

> Extending the rule of law - including access to justice, improved capacity of justice and security sector institutions, and justice sector service delivery - beyond Monrovia and a small number of larger settlements remains challenging due to limited state capacity, porous borders and capacity gaps.[16]

235. Liberia became the fifth country to be placed on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2010, and has received project funding from the Peacebuilding Fund since 2007. The Fund prioritizes security and justice actions aimed at reconciliation. A recently finalized Liberia Joint Programme for 2011-2013 advocates measures to fill gaps in security sector reform, rule of law and national reconciliation and coordinating such programmes with the Poverty Reduction Strategy, so that there will be peacebuilding components to all aspects of recovery.

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[16] Liberia Peacebuilding Programme, 2011-2013, Revised 3rd Draft, 5 May, 2011, a joint effort of the government of Liberia and the United Nations through the UN Peacebuilding Programme.

236. The Peacebuilding Fund has been supporting a number of local level projects related to reconciliation, youth (through a youth Volunteer Service), gender, and land conflict resolution, all of which benefit numerous returnees as well as demobilized former fighters. The 2011 programme is divided into two components: The new and more ambitious of the two aims to establish regional Centres of Justice and Security in several urban centers throughout the nation. The centres are to be operated by the Liberian government and UNDP and are meant to increase government visibility and access to justice and security in preparation for the forthcoming UNMIL departure.

237. There are widely shared doubts as to how these centers will be staffed with the needed professionals and how they will interact, respectively, with the central government and local leaders to make justice a reality in the counties. The second component is focused on reconciliation through conflict mitigation, social cohesion activities and youth empowerment. It is through this component that many of the activities created during the first Peacebuilding Fund period are being continued. The first peacebuilding programme was targeted primarily at former combatant youth. The current programme, focused on governance, is targeted more broadly by also somewhat vaguely.

238. The UN Mission has made a concerted effort to achieve integration across the range of agencies and components, vertically and horizontally. UN officials in Liberia confirm that the integrated approach adopted has made inter agency collaboration easier and has reduced the usual fragmentation of multi-agency programmes and projects. The peacebuilding plan does not address IDPs or returned refugees by name, and makes little mention of former combatants.

DDR: unfinished business

239. Liberia illustrates nearly all the issues of DDR integration programmes outlined in the first section on this report. The disarmament by no means removed weapons for those who had possessed them previously and to this day it remains very easy and relatively inexpensive for Liberians to acquire weapons. The benefit packages offered to demobilizing combatants, as is always the case, attracted participants well beyond the ranks of the actual combatants and surpassed available resources. To be sure, the fighting in Liberia was so widespread that nearly anyone of appropriate age and situation could convincingly claim to have fought at some point.

240. The DDR programmes lasted until well into 2009. Despite efforts to dismantle previous military command structures, these have remained intact to a significant extent, especially on the country's plantations and mines where a large portion of the labour has been drawn from ranks of former fighters.

241. Reintegration projects have been and still are the weakest link among DDR projects, a fact that does not distinguish Liberia from any number of other examples of DDR weaknesses. As in similar programmes elsewhere, the primary intention of submitting the former fighters to cantonment and subsequent training was to keep them from undermining the fragile peace process. They received benefits, training, a limited amount of psychosocial counselling and assistance in returning to their communities or other places they designated. There was no planning at the outset to monitor the outcomes when the process ended.

242.   While it is impossible to know, it is likely that the majority of the rank and file fighters did return to their places of origin and were reincorporated by families and communities. A September 2008 USIP Special report based on research in Lofa County carried interviews with former combatants who had recently returned to live there. These former combatants had been able to resettle in their villages and said that they no longer shared the perspectives of the large number of their fellow fighters from Lofa who had opted to stay in Monrovia. The interviewees affirmed that combatants like themselves who returned had difficulty winning acceptance from their communities, but an apparently large number of them managed to do so.

243.   UN and Liberian government sources interviewed confirm the fact that combatants could return to their villages following DDR and be accepted, in most cases, despite their previous activities. However, they also recounted difficult confrontations between the returning fighters and the traditional tribal authorities. The former frequently demanded land allocations from the tribal chiefs and refused to accept the chiefs' decisions as final. Officials, tribal chiefs and village residents also confirm that even when the land was allocated, few of the combatants showed interest in farming it, although they often left older family members to do so while they left for Monrovia.

244.   All evidence points to the fact that large numbers of these fighters chose to live in Monrovia and other cities, or migrated there after a while, with little prospect of employment. Outside of Monrovia, a number of ex fighters are employed in gold or diamond mines operated illegally by former commanders. At the present time, there is widespread recognition that post DDR reintegration of former combatants - and others equally uprooted and unstable - is a still urgent need.

Training initiatives for former combatants

245.   The three sessions of combatant training well illustrate the limited planning and overly optimistic expectations. In 2004, soon after the peace agreement, 500 former combatants were brought from the cantonment centre to a training centre on the outskirts of Monrovia. They were set to receive eight months of instruction in skills such as carpentry, arts and crafts, automotive mechanics and, to this end, received tools and starter kits from UNDP.

246.   It became apparent early on that the training curriculum would have to be modified to include literacy classes since the majority of the trainees were illiterate or barely literate, hence unable to follow manuals and written instructions. In the group, a too-large number were still disposed to violence and were disruptive. Only a minority seemed really to want the training, while the rest sold the tools in their starter kit and failed to attend classes.

247.   In a second phase in 2005, still backed by UNDP, 1000 former combatants were brought to the training centre, but this group was first screened. The conflict management and related counselling sessions were a little longer than they had been, but the sessions were still plagued by violent behaviour. Although somewhat better than the first group, the performance of the second training course again fell short of expectations.

248.   In 2006 a third group came to the centre, but this time the organizers had taken the time and trouble to make contact with the former combatants' families to secure their support. A few

women participated in the third training sessions, presumably belying the assumption that the skills being taught were exclusively "male." The outcomes, reportedly, were better in terms of attendance and discipline.

249. Yet upon 'graduation', only a minority of the trainees fulfilled expectations that they would return to their original areas of origin to farm or open small businesses. Reportedly, these graduates were as likely as previous trainees to remain in Monrovia, living in the poorest and most dangerous sections of the city, and to search for sources of quick money in whatever jobs they could find.

250. A final DDR group of 500 underwent training in 2007-8. This time UNDP first introduced three months of intensive counselling and followed this with six months of training. Again families were brought into the process and contact with families was maintained throughout the course. The training organizers and trainees were pleased with the lessons they had learned in the process. Nevertheless the training programme was not followed by employment, and the skills learned in training were not necessarily marketable in the places they settled. To the extent the trainees remain unemployed, they are also likely to be embittered.

251. The training centre remains open and functioning, and is no longer limited to former combatants. The current 'class' consists of a broadly defined group of people who lack firm settlement and/or employment: Former fighters, women, displaced persons, returned refugees and poor people drawn by and large from Monrovia slums.

252. Trainees as of February 2011 included 107 students recruited and vetted by the ICRC, and 200 who were recruited and vetted by UNHCR—mostly from the ranks of returned refugees. Before entering the training class, they had to pass aptitude tests. Still, there are no employment promises following completion. Training courses that improve capacities among Liberians whose education has been stunted by war are unquestionably beneficial, assuming the courses are geared to established market needs. At this point the country's economy is still too weak to absorb the job seekers but the economy is slowly improving and seeing more investment.

Motorcycle taxi project

253. Along with road building, plantation and mining employment, all of which are short-term and sometimes illegal, a number of former combatants after 2003 undertook a more promising and longer term form of employment that seems to capture the needs of 'at risk' youth. Both former fighters and IDPs acquired motorcycles, primarily by cashing in on benefits from the programmes to which they were eligible or by other means. They used these, at first informally, as taxis. The taxi services emerged mainly in urban centers where young combatants were concentrated after the conflict, including but not exclusively in Monrovia.

254. The taxi service was an attractive option because it offered immediate monetary rewards and independence. For potential taxi users, the service was needed and frequently used. Nevertheless, the negative aspects of motorcycle taxis operated by untrained former fighters are self evident. They were often reckless drivers; they usually ignored traffic rules and were not held accountable for the sometimes dire consequences of their poor driving. By 2008, not only had the number of accidents increased seriously, but there were regular confrontations between

the motorcycle drivers and both commuters and the police. This did not bode well for maintaining law and order.

255.   In 2009 the motorcycle taxi services took the form of an innovative, multipurpose project undertaken collaboratively by the Liberian Ministry of Transport, UNDP and UNMIL and a new Motorcycle Union, with funding from UNDP through the Peacebuiding Fund. The UN asked the Liberian YMCA to be the implementing partner for the project. The project was framed as a peacebuilding initiative, entitled: 'Supporting Peaceful Reintegration of High Risk Youth through Rural Transport Livelihood Opportunities'. It built on the already demonstrated interest on the part of young former fighters in associating their motorcycles with their livelihoods, but was not limited to former fighters. The peacebuilding objectives were:

- To formalize this informal sector activity by offering driving licenses upon completion of a one week training programme on relevant traffic laws, driving skills and conflict resolution. This training effectively reduced the number of serious accidents and confrontations. The added advantage was to bring the 'at risk' and alienated youth to accept a formal relationship with state authorities who would issue the licenses and enforce adherence to the rules;

- To encourage drivers to be less beholden to their old commanders to whom they might otherwise go, as sources of employment income. (The former commanders still operate mines and other quasi-legal enterprises);

- To encourage frequent contact and collaboration between the taxi drivers and community groups and police. To use the licensing and registration requirements to draw the drivers closer to the structure of the Liberian state;

- To reach youth at risk, former combatants and non combatants alike, with an activity that is appealing to them and also integrates them economically and socially.

256.   The project lasted approximately a year, operated with evident success in three counties (thereby encouraging its drivers to locate outside of Monrovia), and was managed locally by the YMCA, a youth organization with several branches that counted many former combatants among its members. Bureaucratically, the project was far less successful. Unsurprisingly, the YMCA was ultimately unable to secure sufficient matching funds which continuing operation of the project required. The YMCA is a committed and serious organization, but lacks major fund raising experience.

257.   The required reporting also came in substantially late. When UNDP informed the project organizers that no more funds were available for the project, it was too late to seek new funding for the current year. This outcome has been discouraging because the project is intelligently targeted at an economic activity that is attractive to all participating parties. The UN sponsors believe they are now better prepared to operate and fund the project, and are looking for full support for the future.

258.   Liberia's former combatants are facing similar if not identical problems to those of IDPs and refugees, but the latter virtually ceased to be acknowledged as special categories once the

programmes in place for them were ended. Yet the IDP and returned refugee population comprise a greater number of uprooted people in the country today.

Land conflicts

259. Land rights, governed by complex and arbitrary rules, have always been contentious. Prior to the conflict rural Liberians generally respected the traditional chiefs who dominated judicial decisions and land allocations in their villages and to a smaller extent in towns. In some of the most conflicted areas of the country, two systems of land ownership, neither complementary nor coordinated, coexist. One is a statutory land holding system and the other a collectively based customary system controlled by local chiefs. The former is more prevalent in urban areas and the latter in rural areas, but is found in both settings.

260. The weakness of the state in rural areas and the realities of local level authorities have had serious consequences for Liberians uprooted by conflict seeking to settle or resettle in rural settings. The major issue of contention has been land ownership which has been controlled in rural areas by tribal elders.

261. As a direct consequence of the conflict, numerous returnees found their land occupied by others or were, for other reasons, unable to acquire land in their former communities. In the important and conflictive central counties of Nimba, Lofa and Bong, members of the Mandingo tribe were the most frequent victims of land loss. The Mandingos are largely Muslim, and have been more often engaged in trading than subsistence farming.

262. Prior to the conflict, Mandingos frequently purchased land close to roads to facilitate marketing. Mandingos owned a significant portion of Liberia's public transportation. For these reasons, the traditional agrarian tribal inhabitants, strongly rooted in regional and ethnic identities, considered Mandingos to be outsiders. They associated Mandingos with Guinea because of the latter's family and tribal ties that run across the borders; they considered Mandingos to be closer to the power structures in Monrovia than to their respective counties of residence. In short, although Mandingos had inhabited the counties for generations and purchased land there, they were 'outsiders' and non-citizens in the tribally organized society.

263. Co-existence was not a serious problem prior to the conflict, but became nearly impossible as a result of it. The Mandingos were driven out by Taylor's armies and became refugees, primarily in Guinea and other parts of West Africa or IDPs primarily in Monrovia. The members of the traditional tribes who supported Taylor seized the abandoned and potentially profitable Mandingo land.

264. Mandingo fighters returned victoriously to Liberia with the opposition LURD armies. Following the Taylor defeat Mandingos who were not armed fighters returned to their places of origin. Not only did they find their land to have been confiscated, but were blamed by local citizens for LURD brutality during the conflict. The local chiefs gave the land to allies in their own tribes despite the fact that the Mandingo owners had purchased it (i.e. in the framework of statutory not traditional land ownership system). There arose a critical need for reconciliation and land adjudication mechanisms outside of the framework of the traditional regional and tribal hierarchy of authority.

265. Mandingos are not the only major segment of Liberian society affected by the contradictory and arbitrary land systems. Whether women can claim the right to family land if there is no male head of household varies from one to another tribe, but in general it is difficult. Women have backing from international and some national entities in support of their land rights, but even when they can claim land, their community integration can be problematic if they are alone.

266. Single women face a continuing pattern of gender based violence, including rape. Young returning refugees and former combatants, for different reasons, are confronting the land acquisition systems. When they return to communities where they have family members they are theoretically eligible to reclaim or acquire land, but they frequently challenge tribal chiefs over land allocation, improvements to land and boundaries.

267. To add to the confusion (and corruption) Liberians wishing to bypass the traditional rural authorities and acquire land removed from the latter's jurisdiction have been creating what they are calling 'cities' in rural areas. The new 'cities', which often encroach on disputed plots of land, are then used for patronage and jobs. The central government, which officially owns the land managed by tribal chiefs, has been offering tracts of land for payment to commercial concessions.

268. The groups now challenging tribal authority in the communities either never were fully embedded in traditional social hierarchies or do not want to be subject to these hierarchies. The erosion of traditional power structure may be considered a step in the direction of modernity. Nevertheless, there is cause for concern in terms of rural peace. With the state still unable to assert its own institutions, there is a risk either of a power vacuum or a power struggle between conflict hardened young people and tradition bound elders.

269. Urban land and housing and peri-urban land (areas within municipal boundaries that can be farmed) are equally contentious and ownership at times even more difficult to sort out. Most rural land is officially owned by the government which has permitted traditional leaders to govern allocation or sales decisions. Although most urban land is privately owned and in theory easily bought and sold, it has been subject to political manipulation and corrupt transfer practices over many years.

270. Cities and towns are growing and peri-urban land on the outskirts of towns becomes more valuable as urban populations increase and demand for fresh meat and produce rises. Much urban land is unoccupied and claimed by absentee owners, who are frequently expatriate Liberians. Unoccupied land can neither be taxed nor developed. As the urban population grows, there are growing strains on municipal resources and the prices of urban property rise overall.

271. The Liberian government has taken the important step of establishing an independent Land Commission which will prepare the ground for an eventual land reform. The Commission is based in Monrovia with offices in the most contested counties of Lofa, Bong, Nimba and the more remote counties in the south-east. It has set out to regularize the contradictory and confusing rules and regulations governing land, as well as to settle ongoing disputes.

272. The Commission is mandated to review problems related to rural and urban land. Thus far its emphasis has been on rural land disputes but in 2011 and 2012 it will devote more attention to urban land conflict, including problem of urban squatters who live on government owned land in Monrovia and other major cities.

273. Since 2006, the NGO, Norwegian Refugee Council has taken major responsibility for land adjudications upon request by the contending parties and has now trained a large number of Liberian staff members in mediation skills. The NRC process has won wide acceptance and has produced lasting agreements regarding ownership as well as land boundaries. Titles are registered as soon as agreement is reached, in the interest of avoiding future need for adjudication.

274. The NRC proposes to leave Liberia at the end of 2012 and to leave behind a dedicated local NGO to continue its adjudication work. Presently the NRC works closely with the Liberia Land Commissioner, with local chiefs and officials at all levels and with government officials in Monrovia.

Refugee and IDP returns

275. 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.

276. As host country pressures to leave have increased, Liberians have continued to repatriate. Liberians and other West Africans can be found living in voluntary exile in each other's countries throughout the region. Most returnees were brought to their original communities. UNHCR restored communities with roads, sanitation, schools and nearby clinics. The underlying objective was to support an inter-agency integrated planning and implementation of reintegration programme aimed at building the capacities of the rural communities with a view of improving their livelihoods.

277. The UNHCR support unquestionably has contributed to community survival in the years since. However achieving community improvements at the outset proved to be less of an 'inter-agency' effort than originally hoped because development agencies were not yet active in the places they were needed.

278. IDP returns have followed a similar but more complicated pattern. An estimated 500,000 to 600,000 IDPs were in UNHCR-managed camps at the time the Accra Peace agreement was signed, in addition to the thousands of IDPs who took refuge with families in counties less affected by conflict. UNHCR supported IDP camps in several population hubs in the country but primarily in and around Monrovia. In these camps, NGOs and UN agencies provided protection, relief and basic services. UNHCR accompanied and assisted IDP returns between 2004 and 2006.

279.   In 2006, following the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, UNHCR formally closed the camps at government request. The camp closure was controversial. Within the UN and among NGOs the move was criticized as premature because so many of the IDPs had no viable alternative locations where they could go. Large numbers of IDPs negotiated with the landlords of camp land so that they could stay for a time and pay rent. IDPs who went back to their villages sometimes returned to the camps shortly thereafter.

280.   The closing of the camps signified that the formal IDP programme - protection, relief, services - was over. They could no longer claim formal protection from evictions. Outside of the camps, IDPs were occupying public buildings, empty dwellings, sports fields and schools, creating an extremely difficult situation both for themselves and for city and national officials in Monrovia and elsewhere. IDPs, like refugees, received return packages and assistance in the communities to which they returned, often the same communities, but these places were hardly able to absorb them.

281.   It is important to note that in counting IDPs and calculating the assistance packages UNHCR, at the request of the government, did not count the thousands of Liberians who were internally displaced outside of the camps. These constituted a large and underserved population. Because these IDPs were uncounted, UNHCR did not have adequate information about their situation to offer forms of protection while they were assisting and protecting other IDPs in camps.

282.   Whether or not they were in designated camps, a very large portion of the IDP population that came to Monrovia during the war remained in Monrovia and resides there to this day. As the public buildings, schools and fields were gradually cleared, the IDPs moved into squalid slums in and around the city. Other cities that received IDPs in flight faced similar problems. These issues are addressed in the next section.

283.   UNHCR assistance, limited as it is by mandate to the humanitarian domain, has not been adequate to make return communities economically viable. The returnees needed to migrate elsewhere in order to earn income. The skilled returnees who might otherwise be building rural communities, have left for economic, educational or health reasons. They have further crowded into Monrovia and other cities.

284.   Sometimes they maintain ties to their communities and use income earned in Monrovia to contribute to families still in villages. Often they live in the city but return to bring needed goods to their families, for visits and sometimes to obtain goods which they can then sell in the city. If, having left the villages, they are unable to earn money to bring back to their communities they are unlikely to return at all.

285.   Reflecting on the carefully planned community rehabilitation strategies of his agency to address the obstacles faced by these communities in maintaining livelihoods, a UNHCR official expressed his disappointment that the development outcomes were not more robust. The return operation was subject to an all-too frequent 'gap' in the transition from relief to development. He concluded that it would have been impossible not to have given Liberian refugees the opportunity to return to their own homes, because that is what they yearned to do.

286.   But the long-term lack of developmental support for returnees and returnee communities, and the overall stagnation of rural Liberia were predictable. The official acknowledged that the long sought 'homecoming' shared by returning refugees and IDPs could not be made sustainable without other forms of support that were beyond what UNHCR alone could create through rural community development.

Community revitalization

287.   The majority of Liberians identify themselves with their tribe and family land. Even educated and urbanized Liberians have maintained these cornerstones of identity. State institutions did not have the confidence of Liberian society prior to the conflict and were not readily trusted at the end of the conflict.

288.   Government officials were and to a large extent still are considered to be representing political interests In Monrovia and not the communities they are sent to serve. The local officials working in rural areas who answer to the central government find it difficult to persuade rural residents that they are honest brokers - -and many are not. The fact that nearly all such officials still are appointed by the central government reinforces this view.

289.   Through community outreach and dialogue, state authorities are slowly making their presence felt, despite the fact that even with the best intentions they face daunting obstacles: extremely low salaries (if they receive any salary at all), very limited transportation or communications equipment (impeding their ability to assess conditions in their communities), limited confidence on the part of the local inhabitants, and negligible support from the central government.

290.   In large part thanks to the interventions of national and international peacebuilding programmes, there are indications of improving relations between tribal and state authorities and traditional chiefs are increasingly reaching out to these authorities; both are working cooperatively with the Liberian Land Commission. Among both state officials and traditional chiefs interviewed (primarily in Bong County), several declared their commitment to inclusiveness and reconciliation within their jurisdictions.

Restoring rural livelihoods: a model in need of review

291. From the outset, the apparent consensus of Liberian policy makers, international organizations and donors has been the premise that restoration of peace and economic stability would both rest on revitalizing Liberia's agricultural base. Agriculture has always represented Liberia's largest economic sector and has employed over 70 per cent of its people.

292.   The long conflict disrupted both the traditional agrarian economy and its essentially tribally based organization. The aims of the Transitional Government, shared by the present democratically elected government and most donors, have been to restore Liberia as an essentially agricultural society and to accommodate traditional sources of authority while installing effective, accessible and even-handed state governance at all levels. The government

is committed to finding rural options for as many as possible of those now concentrated in Monrovia, preferably a return to their places of origin.

293. The logic is reasonable and is based both on national history, the very limited number of available wage employment opportunities, and present low skill sets of the majority of the population. Ideally Liberian agriculture could be modernized, with a better balance of food for immediate consumption and agricultural products for sale; the spread of educational and health facilities could improve economic mobility and improve the quality of life.

294. However, the political, social and geographic transformations that have taken place in the last two decades require that this vision undergo significant modifications. A government affirmation on the importance of restoring uprooted Liberians to agriculture also noted that Liberians were abandoning their agricultural roots and thereby creating problems for national development:

> The drift from villages to the cities (rural-urban migration) - largely from the agricultural sector - is a matter of concern because of the increasing rate of urban unemployment, housing problems, increasing crime rates and other related social evils.[17]

295. As we have noted, recreating Liberia's agrarian livelihoods and communities have been seriously thwarted by physical devastation of the countryside, land conflict, weakened traditional governance, and the slow progress in establishing state authority at the local levels. Agrarian recovery is additionally thwarted, as also noted, by a general disinclination among young males to consider a future in small scale agriculture and by a widely shared preference for seeking livelihoods in urban areas, primarily in the capital city Monrovia.

296. A much touted $US 5.4 million UNDP programme illustrates the flawed hopes with which restoring agrarian livelihoods are sometimes infused. The Millennium Village pilot project in Kokoyah, Bong, was supposed to improve rice production with high yield seeds, to provide technical assistance to agriculture overall, to introduce community health facilities, bring in teachers for the schools and improve water and sanitation. The end result would be a transformation from subsistence to commercially viable agriculture.

297. The project, almost three years into its five year span when the researcher visited, had achieved little of what had been promised. Community members complained project directors had made solely one visit and had not consulted community leaders regarding their priorities, that the seeds were wrong for the soil conditions, the training courses were too short and not accompanied by needed equipment, the school for which the community had pledged voluntary labour was not yet underway, the health facilities were underway but not staffed, and the community had received only hand tools despite the promise of the mechanical equipment needed for commercial agriculture.

298. The road was still impassable much of the year, so marketing was not viable in any case. The members of the community were surviving largely thanks to part time jobs with an iron ore

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[17] Republic of Liberia, *National Human Development Report 2009: Promoting Human Development through Shared Growth. A Special Focus on Infrastructure and Agriculture.* Forward.

mining company. A number of working age people had left permanently. In fact, UNDP found it necessary to renegotiate its original contract because of the failings of the first contractors. The future of this project may be brighter, but there is little time left to rectify it.

299. Fourteen years of fighting produced an irreversible change in the perspectives and especially in the world views of its greatly disrupted people. Liberia is still a traditional society in many respects, but it has become a far more mobile society whose members will move wherever they believe they will find better means to survive. During the war Liberians across the country were forced to flee violence time and again and at the end of the conflict they were physically and psychologically less firmly tied to the places they started. It is harder to re-establish these ties after an extended period of time away.

300. An individual who decides to return to a rural community first must assemble sufficient resources to bring to family and community and, if possible, earn enough to acquire land. Otherwise they will not feel welcome. In their efforts to find places to settle and earn enough to support families, Liberians today must move wherever there are opportunities. A few examples of such trajectories are presented below.

Individual trajectories

301. The present Bong County Gender Coordinator, representing the government's Ministry of Gender, left Bong County to take refuge in Cote d'Ivoire in the first invasion. She received training and was able to work there. When she returned to the Bong county capital, Gbarnga, she found almost no means of livelihood and was very hard pressed to care for her family and a growing extended family. She began organizing women who, like her, had been abused and providing shelter for those who had no protection.

302. She was forced again by conflict to leave Gbarnga, lived in the bush and found her way to Monrovia where she lived for a time. With restoration of calm conditions she returned to Gbarnga, but when the armies of LURD came through in 2002, she left again for Cote d'Ivoire. Her career since then has been as an advocate and activist for women who suffered during the war and who, with their children, remain at risk.

303. A leader in the National Combatants Peacebuilding Initiative located in Monrovia: Originally from Nimba County, he was captured by rebels at age 15 in the countryside of Bomi County where he had vainly sought to escape the conflict. He was forced to fight for two years, without seeing his parents. After being wounded, he managed to escape to Cote d'Ivoire, returned to Liberia, but was again forced to flee, this time to Guinea, to avoid being retaken by the combatants.

304. In Guinea he registered as a refugee and received assistance from UNHCR. He accepted the UNHCR repatriation package, and returned to his community, but tensions related to his past as a former combatant led him to leave. He spent time in a demobilization centre in Voa, outside of Monrovia. Badly traumatized at the time, he was fortunate in finding help from a Lutheran Church managed counselling centre in Monrovia, where other similarly traumatized former fighters were receiving counselling.

305. By 1998, he was himself had become a trained counsellor, and worked with trauma victims in a centre in Bong county. In 2000, he linked with another child soldier and they founded the National Peacebuilding Initiative in Monrovia in 2002. Since that time funding from the Lutherans, CHF and most recently the Peacebuilding Fund have kept the organization in operation, albeit precariously, and it has grown in members and respect from government and society. Its members are from all over the country.

306. The author of this report worked with the Norwegian Refugee Center NRC whose Gbarnga based Liberian staff all had been refugees, variously, in Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Sierra Leone—or in more than one of those locations. One of them had received training in Guinea which equipped him to be an auto mechanic and driver. Another lost educational years in Sierra Leone, worked there on a plantation but also learned radio repair. He was able to complete high school and, only recently, is taking courses in the local university. A third learned computer software programming in Cote d'Ivoire and now works as a computer technologist for the NRC.

307. They originated from different parts of Liberia and worked in others places before coming to Gbarnga where they had obtained useful and reasonably paid work with NRC. All had spent time in Monrovia, and their families presently are divided among Monrovia, Gbarnga and elsewhere inside or outside of the country. When NRC leaves the country, it is not at all clear where they will live and work.

Agriculture

308. Assuming that Liberian recovery would be based on agriculture, international agencies designed post-conflict integration programmes primarily focused on rural community revitalization, agricultural modernization, construction of schools and clinics, and service delivery. Important as these initiatives were and still are, the projects largely failed to anticipate the obstacles to bringing the target beneficiaries back to the land. They have been particularly disappointing as a means for reintegrating young males.

309. For example in Bong Country, CARE initiated an innovative project intended to train young Liberians how to improve and modernize agricultural practices. CARE leased land to be used for the project, hoping it would lead to the establishment of commercially viable farms that could replace slash and burn subsistence farms. The project eventually found its participants, but they were in large part single women because, as explained by the project director, young men were no longer interested in agriculture. Or, to the extent they were, they wanted land they could own although not necessarily farm.

310. A German Reintegration and Recovery Programme project based in the three south-eastern counties of the country encountered similar resistance to agriculture on the part of youth, who were more interest in low pay wage labour in nearby mines. However the resistance, reportedly, was also due to the fact that the traditional elders would not to give the land to them. The youth showed little interest in the vocational training offered within the framework of the project.

311. Another legacy of the conflict concerns women who lost their families and, in the traditional Liberian system, had limited or no access to land ownership. They have been open to the projects described above, and to working in collective agrarian and semi agrarian settings. The farming land near cities is proving especially attractive for rural women who lost family members, were forced to flee and as a result lost the rights to the land they once occupied. There are projects in place that assist women to create small businesses and engage in trading. Women (as in Colombia and in most countries) represent the largest number of clients for micro finance projects.

Integrating away from home

312. The government is only beginning to recognize that conflict and massive displacement not only have set back Liberian development but also have realigned the country demographically. The most visible indication of the change is that more and more Liberians and especially young Liberians are living in or moving to urban areas. Therefore as the country seeks to restore the rural communities devastated by conflict, it cannot ignore the expansion of urban spaces and the creation of new urban communities within these urban spaces in which uprooted people are now choosing to live and seek employment.

313. Clearly, integration strategies for Liberia's uprooted population will need to improve the agricultural sector to make it more attractive and economically viable. The traditional rural leaders who have been exposed to peacebuilding training, conflict resolution and similar themes show signs of responding with greater openness to gender rights, youth needs and fair distribution of land. Improving agricultural efficiency and commercial potential, while expanding tolerance and inclusiveness in rural governance, are positive steps.

314. However, the country's future also lies outside of agriculture and, especially, in more urbanized settings. With only three per cent of Liberian youth showing interest in farming according to its calculations, one USAID report acknowledged the need for agricultural skill development as well as vocational training for off-farm livelihoods in rural areas. The average age of farmers is now over 55, the report concluded, and urban migration continues unabated.

Uprooted Liberians in Monrovia

315. IDPs, returned refugees, former combatants, poor people from the still-under developed countryside, aspiring students and professionals all see the capital city, Monrovia as the place to go for opportunities and individual advance. The city was always a mecca for people dissatisfied with what rural life had to offer.

316. The population in Monrovia has continued to grow since the end of the conflict. It is now variously estimated between 800,000 and 1,500,000, at least triple its pre conflict population of 400,000 to 5000,000. This growth is the more impressive taking into account that UNHCR brought some 327,000 IDPs back to their places of origin from Monrovia based camps at the end of the conflict. For Liberians nationwide, 'living in the city' means living in Monrovia and it seems every rural village has some of its residents doing so. It is common for families living in counties where there are no secondary schools to send their families to Monrovia.

317. As already noted, it is common for rural citizens to go back and forth to trade, bring their products directly and staying for long periods of time. It is common for residents of Monrovia to proclaim their intention return to their original homes, but to put off doing so. The most often cited reason is that they have been unable to earn money to bring with them to their families. Gradually, their families come to join them instead.

318. Monrovia is Liberia's only self governing city with the power to tax its residents, but the revenue it is able to draw from its predominantly poor population is insufficient to run the city. (The Ministry of Interior controls the budgets and appoints officials in other cities, so they cannot tax residents.) The city by all accounts has reached its limits of absorptive capacity. City officials as well as residents face difficult and painful choices in deciding what to do about the present population and how to manage likely future population pressure.

319. Former IDPs comprise a major component of Monrovia's population increase. When IDP camps were dismantled, a large number of the former inhabitants of these camps were absorbed into the formal and informal labour sectors and slum communities of the city. During the conflict, IDPs who were not receiving assistance in camps were squatting in public buildings and unused spaces in the city, and were obliged either to leave the city or find other alternatives. Former IDP squatters have been allowed to remain on some plots of unused publicly owned land for the present. Their growing presence of squatters on this land has transformed it into heavily populated slums in and around the city.

320. Neither in Liberian legislation nor planning are there proposals for a Liberian equivalent of 'differential treatment' for IDPs as is found in Colombia. IDPs who came to Monrovia during the conflict and did not return to their own communities when the fighting ended are not perceived to be in protracted displacement, but as part of urban poor, with no rights beyond those of other poor Liberians.

321. The continuing migration to Monrovia is now an economic migration rather than a conflict driven one, but at its core, it is in nearly every way an outcome of the war. The humanitarian organizations contributing resources to community survival in the country side have been far less visible in Monrovia helping the slum dwellers who left these same communities.

322. 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.

323. 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.

324.   The settlement called Peace Island is an illustrative although not typical example of the obstacles and promises facing slum dwellers. It was founded at the end of the war in 2004, with a population that had come to Monrovia to escape the war in their villages and had first taken refuge in the Ministry of Defence building. It is not typical because it has attracted residents from several ethnic groups who have consciously chosen to live in a diverse community. The population continues to expand and as of 2011 had reached 20,000-30,000.

325.   Peace Island is better organized than most slum communities, with an internal governance structure, a grievance committee to deal with disputes, and a shared determination to move forward as a community. The population is diverse and represents Liberia's ethnic diversity. In these respects, Peace Island is unusual. In other respects the residents of Peace Island face the same reality as slum dwellers throughout the city: Very high unemployment—despite the fact that the majority of Peace Island residents report having marketable skills-- shortages of water, poor conditions of health and sanitation, limited educational opportunities and high insecurity with regard to the future of their community.

326.   Peace Island was established on a mango swamp, is owned by the government, and is at risk on ecological grounds. It is not a legally constituted community and is subject to dissolution. The leaders are working with government officials to find a solution and are encouraged by the fact that Peace Island now has its first community road.

327.   Although eventually returning to home villages is constantly on their minds, their commitment to their present community grows more solid. Some reported that they tried to return but could not stay in their villages. Most said they had all but given up on return in the short or medium term because they did not expect to earn enough in Monrovia to make them welcome at home if they did return.

328.   Another slum community, West Point has existed since the 1940s, created on publicly owned recovered waterfront land and consisting largely of fishermen working from shacks along the water. It now contains some 70,000, one third of who were IDPs. The problem facing West Point residents is not illegal status, but the interest of the City government in upgrading the waterfront. City officials interviewed acknowledged what residents reported: evictions were likely in the process of clearing the slums and improving the overall quality of living in the area.

329.   The Liberian Slum Dwellers' Association also acknowledges the inevitability of evictions among several slum communities. The Association accepts that wetlands and swamps should not be residential habitats and that improved infrastructure in present slums will benefit residents overall.

330.   The Association, with support from UN Habitat, UNDP and other entities has been urging the government to resettle members of the communities in another part of the city or on land nearby, with decent housing and support for livelihood recovery. These entities, however, have not yet pledged resources for such a large scale endeavour. The Association characterizes its members as, "generally women, children, poor, fire, flood and war victims who are faced with … hardship in slum communities."[18]

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[18] From a Declaration of the Slum Dwellers Association of Liberia, October 2010.

331.   Life in Monrovia is difficult for its poor residents and they have suffered. The government is interested in finding humane solutions for the city's vast slums, but also interested in improving city housing, sanitation, water, transportation and commerce. The government seeks to develop its capital city in an economically sensible way. The city government's actions in reclaiming public land and improving the city may eventually lead to better housing and more regular employment.

332.   The immediate prospects, however, are threatening to the slum dwellers who live, as many do, on government owned land; this is especially so when they live on government owned land that is environmentally threatened by their presence. The slum dwellers themselves insist they have no alternative place to go.

Income-generating options

333.   The Liberian government strongly promotes integration solutions outside of the Capital City Monrovia. There are several options that would decongest the capital city, all of which offer limited benefits at the present time, but could be made more viable especially for those who have not returned to their past communities and activities.

334. Traditional agriculture can and should be modernized and more efficiently commercialized. Doing so requires, first, that the Land Commission successfully completes its task of rationalizing land laws so that the transfer of land can be achieved in a framework understood and accepted by all parties. Second, currently unresolved land disputes need to be resolved by adjudication or by more formal judicial measures. Third, resources for agricultural inputs, appropriate seeds, and credits for small farmers are essential. There is most certainly a market for fresh produce in Liberia but market roads are atrocious or absent.

335.   As also suggested previously, agricultural cooperatives near cities or other economic centers (e.g. near mines and plantations) are already showing success, and have been especially attractive to female farmers who want to live in rural areas near their places of origin but who either do not have access to land or cannot farm it alone. Presently, such projects are donor supported. Since donor support is ending as NGOs leave, these cooperatives may or may not prove sustainable.

336.   Liberia is rich in natural resources. Prior to the conflict, Liberia's economy relied heavily on foreign exchange and investment in mining and on rubber production. State revenue today again depends to an important extent on these economic activities and both inside and outside of government, Liberians express interest in further developing these sectors. Not only do mining and commercial plantations (e.g. rubber and palm oil) promote economic development outside of Monrovia, including in the poorest parts of the country, but they offer wage labour which post-conflict young Liberians seem now to prefer over agricultural cultivation.

337.   Some of the mines and plantations are operating wholly or partially illegally and their management has been dominated by former combatant leaders. The government has sought to take control of these enterprises by legalizing, regulating them, and improving conditions. Jobs in both mining and rubber plantations are almost always short-term, and pay below what families need to survive. The Firestone Rubber Company was sued in 2007 for maintaining

slave-like conditions on its plantations, but conditions at Firestone significantly improved thanks to government and international pressures.

338. According to Firestone itself, farmers who eschew traditional consumer crops like rice, express interest in growing rubber for purchase. (A County Planning officer stated in stronger and disapproving terms, "people are going mad over rubber. Everyone wants a rubber farm!"). Mining, likewise, presently offers primarily short-term employment at very low wages. For the Liberian government nationally and locally, the fact that ArcelorMittal and other companies are expanding is positive.

339. The Mittal company has agreed to pay Nimba, Bong and Gran Bassa counties for the railroad rights to transport iron ore, and that money has been channelled largely for community development in the three counties. The government has earned significant tax revenue from mining companies and continues to negotiate with these companies for more exploration and production.

340. Thousands of young Liberians have been working under illegal conditions in gold mines, managed in large part since the conflict by former commanders. Rather than to close down such mines, the UN is proposing to legalize their operating statutes, ensure they are paying due taxes, and improve working conditions.

341. The dismal state of so much of the country's infrastructure and social infrastructure is a major obstacle to its economic development. Building or repairing the badly needed roads, bridges railways, ports and communications networks; repairing water systems, irrigation networks, sanitation facilities; constructing schools health clinics and public administration buildings are also potential sources of employment throughout the country as the government and a few donors pursue decentralized development. Finding sufficient funding is obviously a constraint. So too, unfortunately, is the presently low level of skills among the unemployed population. Construction teams will need training before being deployed, making this option less attractive for investors, foreign or domestic.

342. Trade among West Africa's nations is longstanding and if peace can be preserved in the region, trade will again grow and provide economic opportunities for many Liberians. At present, Liberia imports virtually all its consumer goods. Increased regional trade will stimulate agriculture and give a further stimulus to urban growth in the cities near Liberia's borders. As will be discussed below, the population of these cities has both grown and changed since the war as a direct result of displacement during the war.

343. Expanding sources for earning non-agricultural income outside of Monrovia is essential. The motorcycle taxi services project of UNMIL described in the previous section, and the options elaborated here can encourage young people who are uprooted and regarded to be "at risk" to earn an income in other parts of the country. It is essential to support those options that already attract at risk youth and help turn these activities into legal, long-term and non-exploitative income generating outlets. Liberia needs more local participation in determining patterns of growth and development outside of subsistence agriculture. Presently, virtually all but the most minor political and economic decisions are determined in Monrovia.

Cities with potential for integrating uprooted populations

344.   Two conclusions emerge: Monrovia will remain the pre-eminent city in the country but continued growth at the present rate is detrimental both to the city and its citizens. Second, growing numbers of Liberians prefer urban to rural life. It seems clear that further investment in cities other than Monrovia is a valid option. Cities outside of Monrovia have grown since the conflict. Many people flocked to cities when their villages were overrun during the conflict and their inhabitants did not or could not return to their villages in many instances.

345.   These IDPs did not necessarily live in camps or receive assistance. As In the case of Monrovia, a sizeable portion of the IDP population stayed in the towns. Or, they returned to their villages and left again soon thereafter for varied reasons: economic opportunity, fear of political rejection or reprisals in their home villages, sexual discrimination or abuse, loss of land. Monrovia may have been the first choice, but a few cities, as Gbarnga, described below, have attracted a larger population from their own region and drawing residents from several other counties and even from Monrovia.

346.   In the absence of conflict, there are solid economic reasons to settle in cities located along trade routes and near international borders or that are outlets for mining and plantation. These urban spaces can attract investment, can afford to improve basic infrastructure and services and have established banking facilities.

347.   Liberians find medium size and smaller cities to be attractive for non-economic reasons as well, and these reasons pertain particularly to people of rural origin who were displaced during the conflict: cities with secondary schools attract Liberians who today are more conscious than ever about the benefits of education (many received education for the first time in IDP camps or refugee camps); attending school is less expensive in smaller urban spaces than in Monrovia.

348.   Cities in general are more open to ethnic and regional diversity than rural areas. While acquiring property is still complicated in all the cities, ownership is more firm than in villages where tribal elders distribute land. Most important, living in urban areas outside of the mega-city, Monrovia, is easier and increasingly promising.

349.   Few cities are reaping such benefits, however, and even the best of them are far from well resourced. Although the cities are growing, urban authorities in both smaller and larger municipalities complain about the direct governance from Monrovia. The national government determines their budgets, appoints their mayors and their teachers and allocates health resources. It is widely believed that greater decentralization is essential to urban prosperity and to the ability of cities to absorb their growing population.

Gbarnga: a favourable evolution

350. Gbarnga is Liberia's second city, located centrally and strategically in Bong County on a major paved road, and the chosen site of several NGOs. Gbarnga will be one of the "hubs" of the Peacebuilding programme's Justice and Security programme. The city was relatively prosperous prior to the conflict thanks both to its location in Bong County and its proximity to natural resources (gold, diamonds, iron ore, timber).

351. Bong was the scene of heavy fighting, and UNHCR constructed six IDP camps in the country. UNHCR maintained a transit centre in Gbarnga until the camps were closed and the area restored in 2007. Charles Taylor chose Gbarnga as his headquarters. The presence of his armies produced major human rights violations and displacement. His supporters from surrounding villages sought refuge from ongoing fighting in the city, while his opponents fled from the area.

352. As noted above, the conflict greatly exacerbated ethnic tensions and conflicts over land. Bong County experienced both, and is still in the process of sorting out property claims. But, Bong country has been less conflictive since the fighting ended, in contrast to neighbouring Nimba and Lofa countries, and has been more receptive to tribal coexistence, including the Mandingos.

353. Why is Bong country overall, and Gbarnga in particular, providing a less conflictive environment than other counties in Liberia? Its residents confirm the premise and offer varied explanations. One is that Bong County is home to several tribes, and the leadership of dominant one, the Kpele, has been more open and accommodating than other tribes are (Mano, Gia) and relatively welcoming to outsiders who want to live in their domains.

354. A second reason is that, as mentioned, the town of Gbarnga is the chosen location of several NGOs, several of which are seriously engaged in general peacebuilding activities, adjudication and conflict management training. Local residents are familiar with the vocabulary and, indeed, the practice of tolerance and accommodation. Obviously, the fact that Gbarnga is Liberia's second city and that Bong country is comparatively prosperous major factors in its attractiveness—both to Liberians and to international organizations.

355. Like virtually every county in the country, Bong has been plagued by corruption at many levels, has yet to establish a reliable judicial system, and continues to experience gender violence on a wide scale. Citizens complain of insecurity. It is hopeful, nevertheless, to note that officials acknowledge the country's problems, at least verbally, and seem to taking steps to improve governance and, equally important, the public perception of governance. The perception of reliable and tolerant local institutions, moreover, has helped the city and country attract more economic investment.

356. Another city, Ganta, is an important trading and commercial centre in Nimba County. In terms of location and resources, this city shows every sign of potential growth and prosperity. Its population has grown, as people formerly from villages come to the city, where life is both easier and less conflictive. Since the conflict, women have had become more prominent in the population and active in small businesses. Because of its easy access to Monrovia, Ganta

merchants trade with the capital and, reportedly, have received numerous return migrants who went to Monrovia after the conflict but prefer to trade from a base in Ganta.

357. But, Ganta's expansion and productive development is held back by three factors: First, the inter-tribal conflicts that took place during the war in Nimba County are still affecting the population. There are land disputes primarily involving Mandingo claimants, toward whom there is still considerable hostility even in the towns and cities. Second, while the city of Ganta is making it easier to purchase land and establish businesses, the city and the county as a whole are less welcoming of outsiders than is Bong County. Third, local governance in Nimba country districts is perceived to be especially bad. There is a continuing tension in Nimba and other countries between moves to modernize or to hold on to traditional practices.

358. The Mayor of Ganta confirmed the less tolerant attitudes in Ganta as compared to Gbarnga, or, as he put it, the levels of conflict in Nimba made life in Ganta "tougher" than he believed it to be in Gbargna. He also explained that it was difficult for newcomers to gain acceptance in Ganta. Not only did those not from Nimba remain outsiders in the eyes of locals, but even returning refugees had "to stay a while in order to be seen as Liberians," (meaning citizens of Nimba). Referring somewhat euphemistically to ongoing and sharp conflicts between traditional leaders and returnees, he noted that refugee returnees had adopted different modes of behaviour and were not "thinking like Liberians." But, he spoke appreciatively of the useful role of land adjudications and peace related training.

359. The Mayor's comments were of particular interest because he had been a combatant in Taylor's army, had allied himself, nevertheless with the government at the end of the conflict, and had been appointed as mayor by President Sirleaf. He affirmed his strong commitment to maintaining peace.

Prospects for the uprooted

360. Liberia displays the sadly typical weakness of a badly war torn state. Weak institutions with officials lacking in experience and capacity; weak human capital, widespread corruption some of which is related to low or non-existent salaries; rural and urban land conflicts, and very slow recovery in the rural areas where the government wants uprooted people to return and take advantage of peace. Donor governments and international organizations have contributed generously, especially since the Sirleaf government assumed office, but international contributions to humanitarian action, social services and peacebuilding are declining as project money runs out and organizations leave.

361. There has been progress and therefore there is good reason for optimism about Liberia's future. The country has wealth on which to build. The central government has tackled a multitude of issues and the results are beginning to show in terms of better functioning governance—though still much to do for balance between Monrovia and rest of country. Traditional leaders and state authorities seem to be reconciling their differences in some places. Formerly violent parts of the country are now calm, and this can be attributed at least in part to relentless peace educational efforts. Civil society is taking shape and women are playing a strong role in it. Women are finding economic alternatives in trade and small consumer oriented businesses. The Peacebuilding fund is making a difference.

362.   One of the most important and permanent legacies Is the urbanization of Liberian society. For this reason the present report has devoted considerable space to urban alternatives. It is not only that resources are strained in all cities and services inadequate, (with time, these problems can be adequately addressed); even more important is the challenge of making urban growth better oriented to the needs of the people who are living there.

363. Evicting people who have been uprooted in order to make room for more dynamic economic activity is a major injustice to the victims of conflict and displacement. If slums are to be cleared, the relocation of slum dwellers to other locations where they can earn a livelihood is an essential measure. In order to support smaller cities so they can decentralize national development and, importantly, absorb some of the migration pressure now centred solely on Monrovia, requires a new national developmental vision.

364.   Although Liberian politics are compromised by widespread corruption at national and local levels, it is ultimately counterproductive to consistently short change local authorities and security by keeping their salaries excessively low and denying them infrastructure support they absolutely need, e.g. motorcycles to transport themselves and computers to keep track and record what they are doing.

365.   Liberia may find it has much to learn from Colombia. As has been described in these pages, Liberia's government is undertaking a development strategy that focuses on poverty alleviation and continued peacebuilding as it strives to restore and build national wealth. The often stated goal of reconciliation is far from achieved. The strategy takes as a given that the beneficiaries will include the vast numbers of people who lost years of their lives and their worldly goods in conflict, or who fought in the conflict while young and face the rest of their lives without a viable future.

366. Will these Liberians who are meant to benefit from the national-wide development programmes actually be able to do so? At the present time, there are Liberians in urban and rural areas who suffer not only due to poverty but because they are excluded from community life and from national progress due to their displacement; and because they are still traumatized by their experiences but have received little or no psychosocial counselling. Much of the population is still not settled and still seeks seek durable forms of integration.

367. Liberian policy must take the legacies of displacement more seriously, as Colombia does. Colombian law has obliged the government and its institutions to address the causes of displacement and to incorporate the displaced into the national fabric. If Liberia cannot undertake such a goal to the extent that Colombia has, for structural and economic reasons, it can embrace aspects of the Colombian approach and recognize more fully the consequences of exclusion.

Conclusions and recommendations

368. Conflict transforms countries demographically. During conflicts and afterwards, people are obliged to move and do not necessarily return to the places where they started. Governments and donors should focus their integration efforts on addressing peoples' needs in locations where uprooted people actually are living. While support for communities devastated by war and for returnees wishing to restore traditional ways of life are essential to integration strategies, these should not obscure the need to address current realities.

369. In the cases both of Colombia and Liberia, as in numerous other countries similarly affected, the nation's uprooted poor very often do not, and prefer not to return to traditional rural environments or survive on subsistence agriculture. This is especially true of young people who already have opted in very substantial numbers for urban settings. In both countries, governments and many donors are seeking to integrate uprooted people in the places they or their parents lived in the past, but investing inadequately in options that encourage people who already have changed their surroundings to build more humane and coherent communities.

370. Young people are resources, and development strategies should regard them as such, and invest in them. Certainly, violence prone youth create problems, and former combatants who have missed childhood and education are more than usually vulnerable to crime and show violent tendencies. Nevertheless, they are not inevitably or permanently threats to national security. Former fighters should not be kept for longer than absolutely necessary in programmes that isolate them from civil society.

371. Humanitarian programmes targeted to returned refugees, internally displaced persons, and former fighters lay the groundwork for re-integration. But, the international bodies that initiate them end their programmes and leave the country while much of the target population is still short of productive integration. The problems faced by those in the three categories then merge, however different their trajectories may have been to that point. In the case of Liberia, the appropriate term now in use to define the plight of the most troubled is 'at risk'.

372. Given the widespread lack of employment and crime that influences youth behaviour, this term is appropriate not only in Liberia, but in numerous countries where violence is high and economic opportunities are low. Programmes targeted at youth cannot afford to ignore their families, who constitute important stabilizing influences. Helping the uprooted to solve their shared problems should continue to be a national priority and that priority should be supported internationally.

373. Rebuilding an economy is not always conducive to integrating those excluded from it. Economic development should aim particularly to incorporate the people who have been socially, economically and politically excluded as a result of conflict and displacement. Furthermore, as the Colombians have insisted, displacement persists until victims recover their livelihoods, recuperate or are compensated for their losses, are secure and have seen some

transitional justice on their behalf. This implies enforcing human rights and removing impunity from the perpetrators of human rights violations.

374. It is inevitable that major cities will grow in times of conflict and will be host to former fighters, former refugees, the internally displaced, ambitious young people and economically strapped citizens generally. The points made in the first conclusion are relevant to why so many returnees to go cities. A further reason is that cities offer more employment opportunities, better education and health services and greater flexibility.

375. Nevertheless the mega-cities like Bogota, Medellin, and Monrovia (or Kabul, Baghdad, Lagos, Nairobi, etc.) are now drawing people at a faster rate than can be absorbed. Therefore, while policies and assistance should be aimed at improving conditions in these cities, it is essential to increase assistance to people living in smaller cities and towns as well.

376. This report has shown that municipalities large and small in both countries have had to accommodate displaced persons for whom they have virtually no resources, even with government subsidies for services to the displaced as there are in Colombia. In Colombia the government is now urging unresponsive municipalities to do better in assisting IDPs and offering incentives to those who do so. In Liberia, the Land Commission's present priority attention to land issues in urban areas is a necessary and positive step.

377. Multiple obstacles currently impede smaller municipalities from absorbing newly arrived and recently uprooted people. These obstacles are far from insurmountable and warrant priority attention. The populations of smaller cities in Colombia, Liberia and elsewhere are growing fast and overwhelming resources and services, but there is too little investment either from governments of international agencies.

378. It is doubly important to invest in smaller cities, first because they are in a position to integrate IDPs, returned refugees and former combatants close to their home regions if not their specific homes. They thereby potentially help to recreate links for the uprooted with their original settings. Placing middle and secondary schools in small cities will allow children from nearby villages to advance their education more easily than if they have to travel to a large city to do so. Better quality teachers can be recruited for schools in towns than in villages.

379. Second, investing in smaller urban spaces decentralizes national development. The IDPs, refugees and former combatants who settle in these spaces can directly contribute to this process. It is in the interest of the IDPs and national security to invest in stronger municipal institutions both in Colombia and in Liberia. Corruption and crime are problems in local governance in both, and municipal support would have to be conditioned on accountability and transparency, as well as a demonstrated political will to ensure that funds intended for services, housing, and income generation activities actually reach the intended targets.

380. International agencies are fundamental for integrating war affected populations. Governments weakened by conflict and decades of poor governance lack the institutional strength, the skilled officials, the financial resources and often the legitimacy to undertake the multifaceted rebuilding tasks required without international support. While international support today is better coordinated, especially in terms of humanitarian relief, the time frames

under which most agencies are operating seem perversely designed to undo much of the good work they undertake.

381.   Humanitarian agencies, development actors, NGOs of both kinds all operate with a short-term project framework that does not easily evolve with changing conditions on the ground. The cluster system has addressed problems at the humanitarian response phase. That phase represents only the beginning of a recovery process.

382.   The following analogy from the realm of disaster responses may illustrate the major point to be made: if there is an epidemic or an excessive incidence of cancer, or a series of infrastructure failures, it is essential to look at the root causes of these: mosquitoes, toxic waste, terrorists who poison the wells? The authorities try to identify and correct the problem and, if appropriate, to sanction the perpetrators. At the same time, it is fundamental and urgent to treat the victims of these events, during and after they occur. The victims need to receive treatment where they are found. At the same time, they should be able to move away from the danger. The treatment should last as long as the victims suffer from the consequences of what has happened to them.

383.   IDPs, returned refugees and many of the former fighters in Liberia and Colombia are such victims. In Liberia, the government is addressing what it perceives to be the root causes of conflict and an uprooted population: poverty, violence, intolerance, etc. But the victims themselves cannot easily recover from their losses. They still need attention and warrant help. Here is where the approach in Colombia is appropriate. The state has established mechanisms to target IDPs for 'differential' (i.e. special) treatment until the reasons for displacement have been addressed.

384.   Even acknowledging that Colombia has far more resources to devote to this purpose than Liberia has, the Liberian approach could be more victim-centred and oriented to helping uprooted people find solutions appropriate to their situations. This victim-centred approach holds as well for questions of transitional justice, which Liberia has acknowledged but has yet to fully address. As for Colombia, this essay praises the efforts are being made to help the IDP population, and the recognition by government and civil society that massive displacement has national and, especially, local consequences.

385.   Where Colombian policies have fallen short is that outside of the military arena, far too little is being done to address the root causes of displacement: poverty, sharp inequality, impunity, corruption and—most important—the failure to achieve peace. Here, the Colombians have much to learn from the transformation being undertaken in Liberia. Colombians will continue to be uprooted so long as conflict persists and if peace can be achieved, there will still be a need for corrective measures to counter the underlying social and economic inequities that have exacerbated conflict for over half a century.