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## Sketching the future



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## Sketching the future



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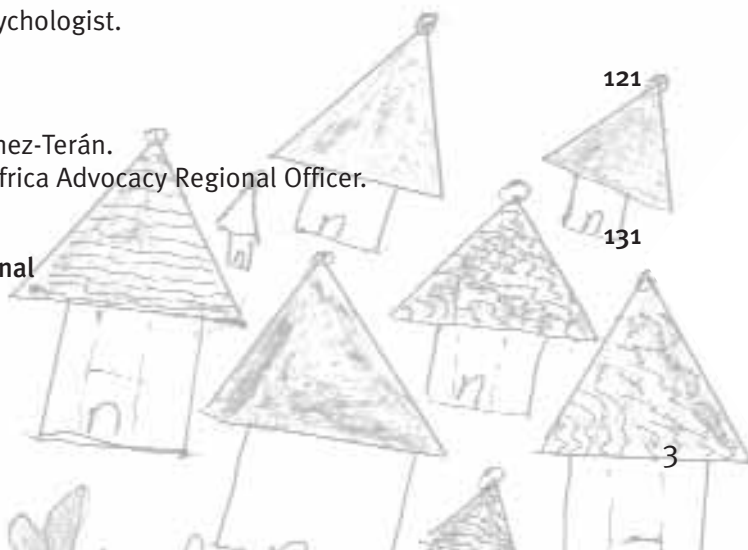
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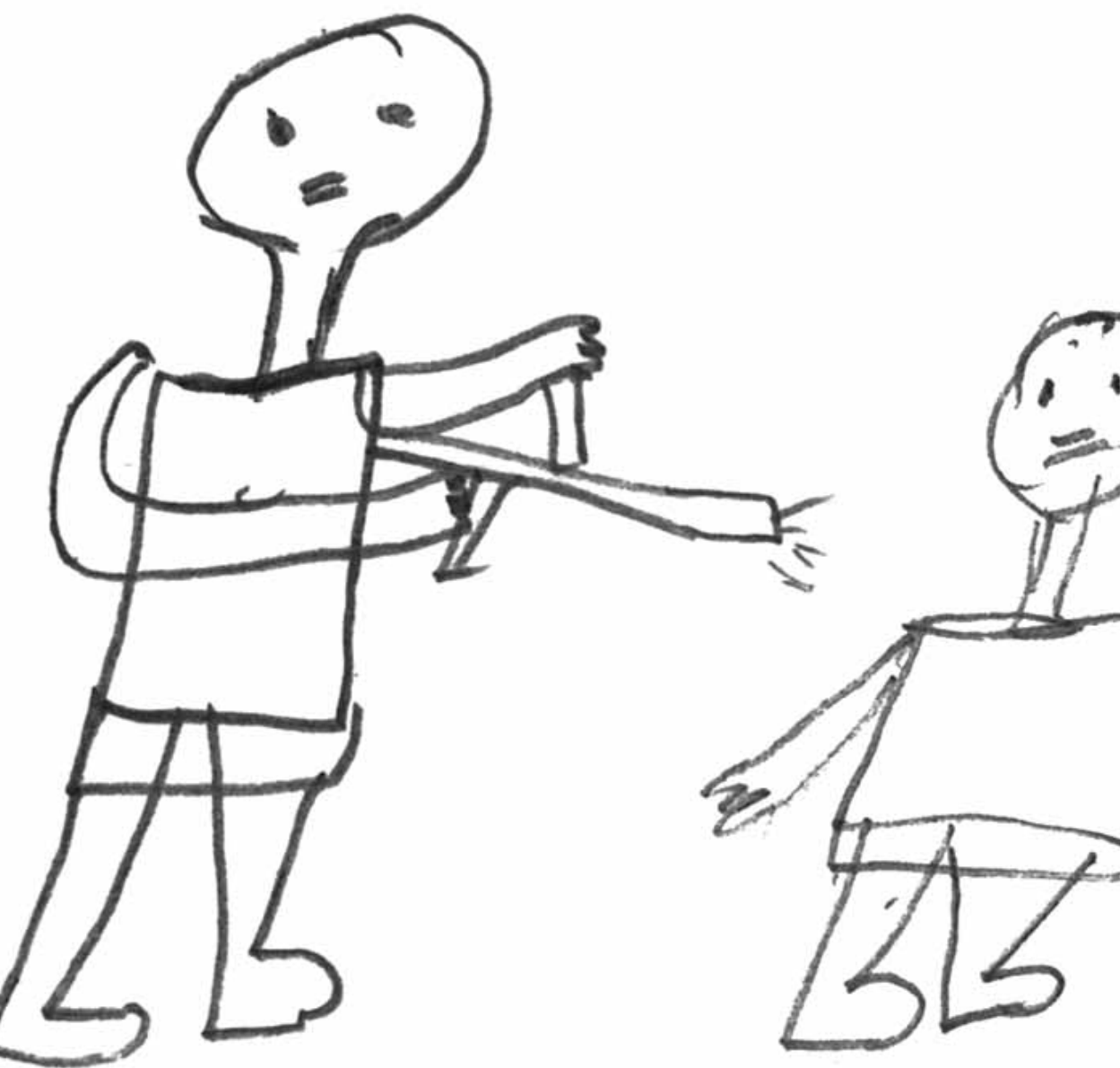
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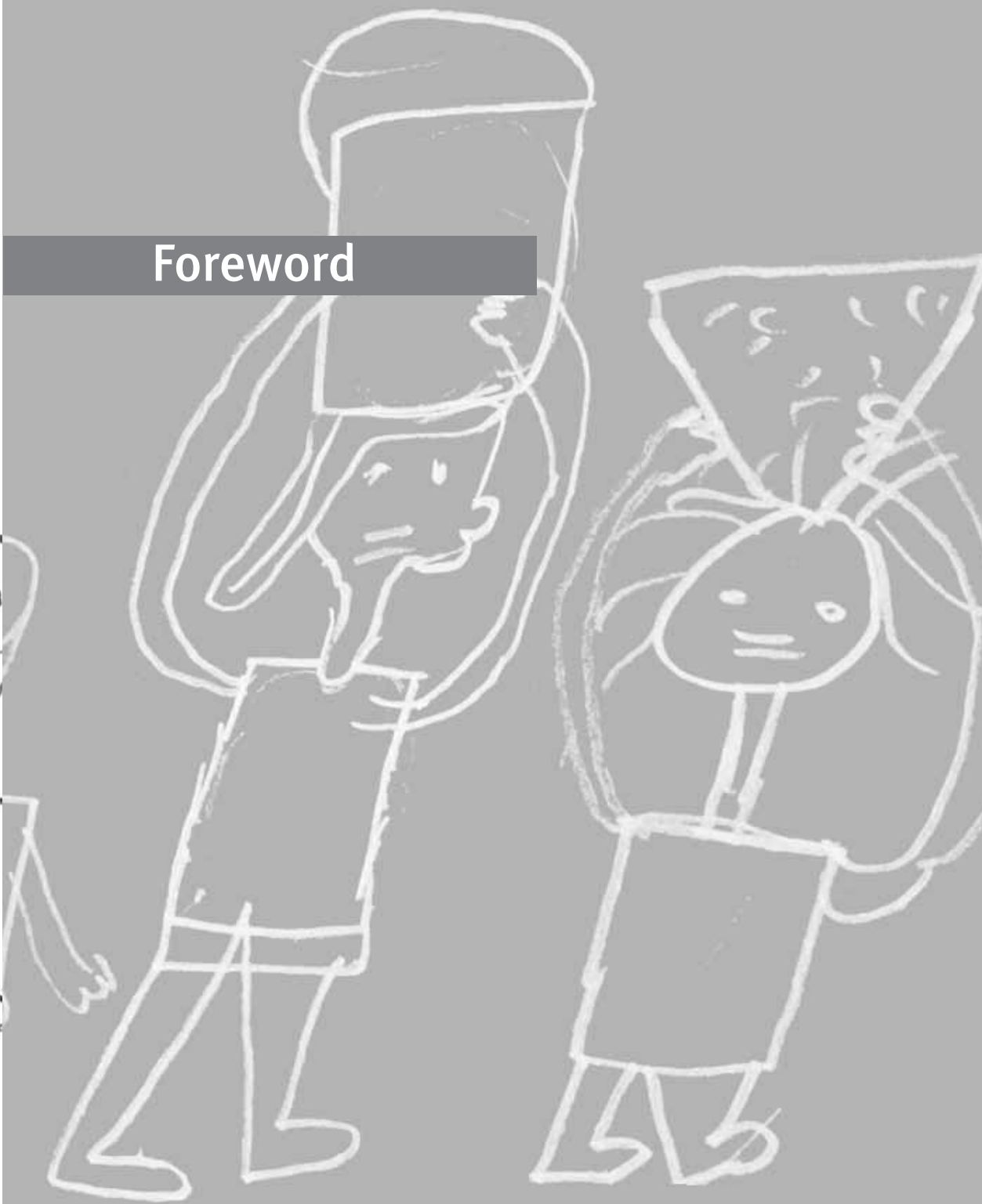
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# Foreword







**The publication you have in your hands** is witness to the situation lived by a large number of people with whom we share this world. It concerns people who have had to leave their homes and begin anew from “zero”. One of the phrases most often repeated by these individuals is: “there’s no place like home.”

However, for different reasons they have been obliged to leave their own. They are refugees, internally displaced persons, emigrants... There are many names we can use to define them, and these names do not lack importance. Refugees have reached a status of international recognition which, in theory, grants them a set of rights that the international community is required to guarantee.

Nonetheless, internally displaced persons, those who move within their own country, are those who currently propose the most alarming challenges to the international community.

In this document we present the testimony and lives of many of the people who lived in the Salala camp during the year 2005. Along with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), they participated in a project that has exceeded initial expectations. This project was based on one of the basic tasks of the Jesuit Refugee Service, to **serve**, in this case, internally displaced persons in the field through educational tasks. Stemming from this service, there was a desire to advance further and adequately assist these individuals. In order to better **assist** them a project was created to listen to the voices and needs of those individuals who were attending the school. A project based on self-expression through drawings about the past, present and future, how they saw this, their hopes

and desires was begun... The outcome was so interesting and effective in allowing those involved to express themselves that the educational community and the rest of the people at the refugee camp also joined the project.

With the publication of this document, we wish to contribute to the third pillar of the Jesuit Refugee Service's mission: **defend** these individuals. We are presenting the situation of internally displaced persons in Liberia as an example of what occurs in many other parts of the world. Our goal is to encourage others to work to ensure that these situations do not occur, and while they do exist, defend the lives of refugees and especially internally displaced persons, the protagonists of this project, whose rights are scarcely recognized.

This year, as we celebrate the centennial of the birth of Father Arrupe, the founder of the Jesuit Refugee Service, we propose a double challenge:

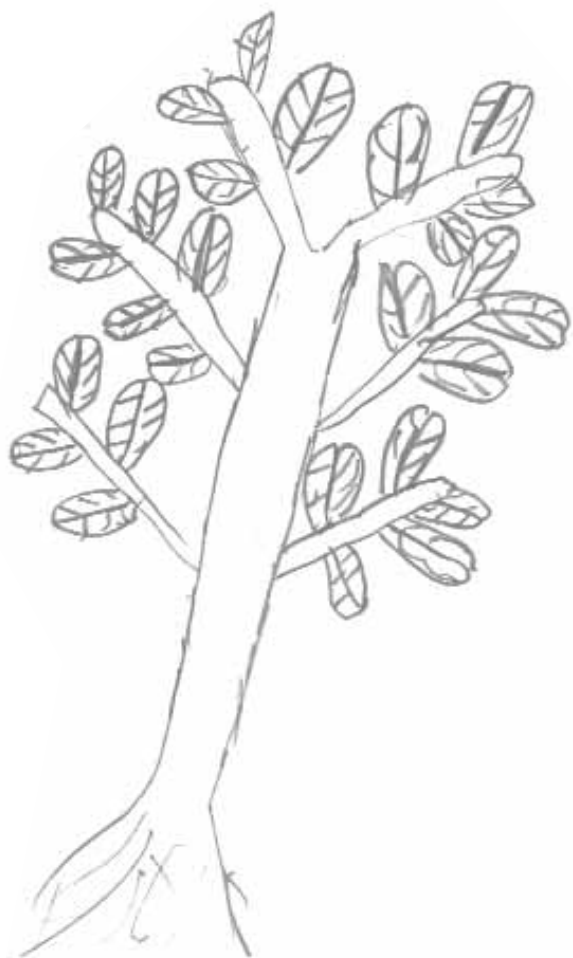
- acknowledge the work of those people involved in this effort and
- attract attention to the situation of refugees and internally displaced people, mostly in underdeveloped areas, who are attempting to return to their homes.

# Chapter 1

## Today's refugees and internally displaced people

Excerpt from text by Lluís Magriñá.  
JRS International Director.





**Today there are around 50 million people** who have been forcibly displaced, 80% of which are women and children. This means that one in every 120 people in the world has been made to flee their homes. Half of these 50 million refugees are in Africa.

There are several reasons for this: persecution due to ethnic, religious origins, political ideas, or because of their escape from war and violence. Entire ethnic communities have suffered armed conflicts, persecution and have escaped from violence. Nevertheless, in the last few years, this has acquired new and extreme dimensions.

Since 1980, the number of refugees increased from 5 million to more than 18 in 1993; today, the number of refugees (people who have crossed the border) stands at over 15 million. While in the 1970s only five countries gave refuge to internally displaced people -families and groups that go beyond their own borders and are therefore not considered refugees-, in 1999 the number rose to 40 countries, and today we can talk of around 30 million internally displaced people.

Who are the new refugees? Internally displaced people from Burundi, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sri Lanka or Colombia. Sometimes it becomes more difficult to help these people than the refugees: prolonged conflicts; the current government is the aggressor; they are continuously displaced; there is a presence of armed groups among the displaced civilian population. No international organisation is responsible for the protection of internally displaced people. The United Nations High Commission for refugees (UNHCR) has a mandate to protect refugees, but not those who do not cross international borders. People requesting asy-

lum in the cities are another category that requires greater attention. Some of them obtain refugee status but the vast majority are disregarded. They are in need of a hot meal, accommodation, study grants and legal assistance. They also need somebody who can defend certain suitable protection structures.

Many people who cross borders fleeing from violence end up in detention centres for immigrants. Their detention is a symptom of the incapability of the international system to manage the immigration situation. There are huge psychological consequences, as well as escaping from their country, they lose their freedom, as a young Sudanese man explained:

"I am seventeen years old. I arrived from Suzanne after escaping from slave traders. I hid in a boat and reached Germany, where I asked other Africans for help. I managed to find some illegal work, I was detained and arrested. The German authorities rejected my request for asylum because the danger of being captured again as a slave was not considered as «political persecution», according to the law. I was detained for several weeks, until one day I was taken to the Sudan Embassy, where I was not given Sudanese nationality because I was from southern Sudan. The German government cannot expel me. They think I have lied about my nationality and are investigating which country I am from. I have been detained for six months."

Sudanese Refugee.

*Almost 20 million people on the move, of which 120 are working immigrants and their families, 20 million African workers live and work outside their place of origin and, according to the same calculations, one in every 10 African workers will live and work outside their country in 2015.*

*"The Democratic Republic of Congo: after years of conflicts, there are now more than 2 million internally displaced people and it is also the origin of a large number of refugees living in neighbouring countries."*

*Burundi produces almost 400,000 displaced people, who have been given refuge in 226 camps throughout the whole country, as well as 300,000 refugees in the neighbouring Tanzania.*



### **Dignity put to the test**

"I have been a refugee most of my life. I remember the day when I fled from my country, Burundi, to go to the Democratic Republic of Congo (previously Zaire), with my parents and five brothers and sisters. I was then seventeen years old. It was the 25th April, 1972. During the years at the refugee camp, I met the person who would later be my wife. Our children were born at the refugee camp. We had to leave it when war broke out in Zaire, in 1996. We fled to Tanzania. For two months, we lived in the church and fished in the lake. But the shortage of food made us weak and ill, so we decided to go to another refugee camp. I now live here, at the Nduta camp, in western Tanzania. Life at the camp is hard, although we do receive food every two weeks. The camp is situated in a forest, and therefore we cannot grow any crops. Neither can we leave the camp, as it is difficult to obtain authorisation. There are many hardships and very few moments of joy for us, the refugees, but the only thing that we cannot do is to lose all hope. After 28 years as a refugee, only God knows when I will return to Burundi."

Nathaniel, a refugee from Burundi.

Being a refugee means living on the outside of society, excluded from all social or political relevance. A refugee man or woman had a role in life. In the internally displaced camp, everyone is a “previous” something or other, a previous farmer, housewife, doctor, minister. A refugee is always expectant, dependent on the decision of others about their future.

Their dignity has been put to the test: others occupied their houses, killed their children, they suffered violence or rape, walked for days and nights until they found a safe place to live. They live in temporary plastic or mud huts, but many have been in exile for years on end. The conflict in Sudan has displaced more than 4 million people from the start of the last stage of the war, at the beginning of the 1980s. In Sri Lanka, the Tamils have been suffering the hardships of war since 1983. The Palestinians have been refugees since the 1940s.

In all of these conflicts, whether they appear in the press or not, the true story can be read in the faces of the refugees themselves.

Whole generations in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe have not known any other way of life other than a refugee camp. Many children find it difficult to receive an education, and they lose all hope of having a future. Adults confuse their roles in society, they lose much of their capability or imagination. Communities become dependent on aid and their cultures fade away due to a lack of creative space. Generations remain in a legal, social and political limbo, often ignored by the international community. When they are not ignored, the lives of the refugees run the risk of being distorted by the media communication.

The refugees receive food rations every week and every month, because they have no lands to grow crops nor cattle to look after. Generally, the humanitarian organisations take care of their basic needs, and therefore their way of life changes radically, and the family structure is broken.

Gabriela Cohen, an Angolan woman, explains how *“the levels of domestic violence increase due to the changing roles: the refugee man is no longer in charge of bringing food to the household. The patriarchal structure is broken and the relationships between men and women, and between generations is destabilised. The traditional mechanisms of maintaining the order in the community are also broken. Children easily lose their respect for their parents, as others are responsible for feeding them”*.



Perhaps the greatest problem of refugees is that they are waiting to go back home and have nothing to do. There are no activities, there is no work. It is important for refugees to have a project to carry out or to identify themselves with a goal. The risk in a refugee camp is that refugees often opt for armed conflict as their only possible objective.

How can we accompany refugee people so that they can build their lives and look after themselves? The challenge is to establish a mutual relationship with them, free of any dependence.

*At the root of the majority of the conflicts is the fight for control, whether it is for a government or territory.*

*The refugee camps can be anything from small settlements for 50 people - there are more than 100 small settlements for refugees from Sri Lanka, in India - to the more than 150,000 that we find in the case of the Burundi refugees in Tanzania.*



*In many cases, the access to the camps is blocked, which means that refugees cannot leave to get firewood for cooking. They have also been banned from trading in the local markets. Working outside the camp is forbidden. These conditions and restrictions help to create and interiorise even more feelings of misery among the refugees. At the Kiziba and Gihembe camps for refugees from Congo, in Ruanda, for example, they have been stopped from cultivating the lands, and, as in many other camps in Africa, the food rations have fallen to 60 percent. All these conditions bring about the demoralised feelings of the refugees, up to the point that some of them abandon the host country and return to their own, even though the causes that made them flee have still not been resolved.*



## **Welcoming others**

The hostility towards foreigners is born from a heart full of obstacles, hardened, and incapable of seeing the wealth of the human being, and of the different colours offered by humanity. The hostility found in an individual is born from group hostility.

We also learn a great deal from the welcoming that the actual refugees offer us, when we visit their homes. The change of the heart from hostility to hospitality can be found when one experiences this welcoming and the gift of opening up to the reality of an individual or a family of refugees. Hostility is born from ignorance and hospitality is born from opening up to others.

The collective hostility of the Western world could be cured by observing the hospitality that exists in other cultures. Perhaps we have forgotten that hospitality is a sign of civilisation.

The accompaniment of refugees offers us a special opportunity to understand and provide practical help to people from other confessions. More than half of today's refugees are Muslims. In Cambodia, for example, the JRS worked together with the Buddhist monks to rebuild their monasteries and help them to reinstate their place in Cambodia Society.



## **The individual in the centre**

An impersonal mass of immigrants or refugees does not exist. Behind the cold statistics there is a specific person with a unique story to tell about their exile.

It is easy to be disillusioned when you see a huge refugee camp housing 200,000 people, such as the one in the west of Tanzania. But it is also easy to have feelings of hope of solidarity when you speak to a refugee, sharing their feelings and life.

In the newspapers we read about the alarming “invasion of the immigrants”. The governments are concerned with raising walls and are occupied with the task of creating a fortress in Europe, which will protect us from the outside world and not affect our ordered society.

While the walls of Western Europe grow against those who seek asylum and the immigrants, the problem moves further towards the East: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania or Lithuania who receive Sudanese, Afghans, Tamils from Sri Lanka, many in search of work, others in search of safety, and the majority trying to get closer to the west. In other parts, but especially in Europe, the task of distinguishing between an immigrant and a refugee becomes more and more difficult, as in the distinction between

“voluntarily” or “forced” movements of the population: those who are fleeing from persecution and death and those who are escaping social misery and injustice.

The governments are sceptical, the refugees are ignored, their stories are simplified and are left unheard.

It is the responsibility and the challenge of society to listen to what is happening in other regions of the world. Very little of what is happening in Indonesia or in Angola reaches our television sets. However, every continent and every region is in some way or other marked by an armed conflict, and therefore by a massive movement of people. If we understood the reasons that push a person to escape from his or her country, perhaps the ghost of the “masses” or the “invasion” would start to fade away.

*There are 50 million people who can be classified as forcibly displaced people, according to the traditional and legal interpretation of the term; in other words, refugees and internally displaced people.*





## Defending the rights of refugees and internally displaced people

"For us refugees, life is not easy. Our rights are not respected in our homelands and are often violated in the lands that receive us. We have no voice, and when we try to speak our voice is not heard. But we are alive, that is our greatest hope. Some day we will return home, where there will be peace for all and we will rebuild our lives."

Jean, a Burundi refugee in Tanzania.

Wherever there is conflict, there is a violation of human rights and consequently a forced movement of the population. The rights of refugees are frequently violated in their country of origin, during their escape and in the asylum country. Any search for a solution to their displacement must respect their fundamental rights.

Although it may seem obvious, the connection between human rights and those forcibly displaced has started to receive international attention in the last few years. There is a general awareness that respect for human rights is essential in efforts to prevent conflicts.

Working with refugees is not only a question of solidarity, it is also a question of justice, and we are all asked to act so that justice may become a reality. Refugees are a visible sign of the extensive global injustice and of the violations of human rights. And for this reason, we must fight to recover the balance, even questioning the attitudes and structures which discriminate poor and oppressed people<sup>i</sup>.

Nowadays, a lot of people talk about reconciliation. The refugees, the innocent parties of conflicts, are those who can start the task of reconciliation.

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<sup>i</sup> KOLVENBACH, P.H., *God in exile. Towards a shared spirituality with the refugees*. Jesuit Refugee Service, Rome 2005.

Very often, we have seen the widows of ethnic groups get together and talk, or groups of landmine victims reflecting over their situation together. Those who suffer are the ones who have the greatest interest in changing the world in which we live.

The organisations and churches that work with victims of armed conflict are the witnesses and the voices of the violations that these suffer in their basic rights. An effective way of defending these rights is by listening to these people, helping them to talk about their situation and be the channels through which their voices can be heard by those who must decide their future.

“When we look at their situation, we see that the refugees have been deprived of all their rights and subjected to all kinds of humiliations. That is why we defend their rights by what ever means we can. Working with refugees and the displaced is a true privilege because deep down it transforms our values and attitudes towards others, as a result of our love for them.”

Miriam Wairimu, a JRS volunteer in Nairobi.

*When a nation succumbs to a conflict, producing large-scale displacement, the education of the young is interrupted, sometimes depriving a whole generation of a basic right.*

People without a state suffer a double wound of seeing how they are denied the possibility of returning to their homes, and at the same time they are denied the nationality. Many of the Bhutans who are refugees in Nepal, today belong to this category or are at risk of becoming so. In the Dominican Republic, many young people originating from Haiti are denied their birth certificate and documentation, which prevents them from accessing basic public services such as education, health, and leaving them with a permanent fear of being deported from the only country they have ever known. And this occurs despite the Dominican constitution declaring quite clearly that all children born in the Dominican Republic have the right to Dominican citizenship.

"Every person has the right to a nationality".

Any analysis of the problem of a stateless person should consider that denying citizenship is, in many cases, a form of racial discrimination (whether it is the Dominican of Haiti origin or the Bhutan refugees in Nepal).



### **An opportunity to learn from refugees or displaced people**

"We lost everything. We had three houses, 10 hectares of land, the car... They burnt our homes because we are Tamils. We fled towards the north of Sri Lanka, to the province of Jaffna. I sold all my jewels. We would have gone mad if it hadn't been for our faith and because of the Eucharist. Now we do not have many things, but at least we are alive."

An internally displaced woman in Sri Lanka.

The lesson of hope and strength that this woman offers us, in her fragile state and suffering, is born from a strong experience of God. Like this teaching, the experience of the JRS is that refugees teach us a lot about life and of the spirit if we listen to their voices and learn from their extreme solidarity, welcoming and generosity. This experience reaches deep down in a human being because they are people who have lost nearly everything and still they maintain a determination to live and restore their dignity. *“We see the best and worst of mankind in our work, but life is stronger than death”*, explains Mateo Aguirre SJ, regional director of JRS in Western Africa.

And therefore the experience of Gildo Dominici, a JRS volunteer in Galang, Indonesia, during the 1980s, is quite inspiring: “I am rediscovering humanity here in Galang. Selfishness and ambition exist, but the positive aspects of human nature are much more evident. Here, human solidarity is a reality, not only nice words.”

Our great temptation when faced with suffering is to start up projects, offer material things, decide what the refugees need. They often reach exile without any shoes, or with only the shirt on their backs, hungry, without any clear plan of action. But they have not escaped to obtain a pair of shoes or a shirt. Their human experience is a call for respect. These are people who have been traumatised by violence, they are alone, rejected and physically exhausted and have lost their place in a stable society. Sometimes they come here with a feeling of guilt because of what they have had to do to survive. They want to be understood, listened to. Bill Yeomans SJ explained the following on his experience with refugees: “I am going to work with refugees, not by giving them things, but as a person who has to first learn what to provide them with. In an emergency situation, it is obvious that food, housing and medical attention are the basic needs and must be provided as soon as possible. That is obvious and easy. But no. People who are hungry, without shelter and friends, easily lose their sense of human dignity. It is not enough to give them what they need. I must give it in such a way that their personal esteem is restored. In such a way that their hope and trust in humanity is rebuilt... After working with refugees, I realise more and more that if I do not give myself to them it would be better if I did not give anything at all<sup>ii</sup>.”

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<sup>ii</sup> YEOMANS, W, *The refugee experience*. Jesuit Refugee Service, 1989.



He or she has the right to be listened to. A refugee is asking somebody to listen openly to this question and it also teaches us not to be afraid of asking ourselves why. Perhaps we do not know the answer, but we must learn to present the question.



## **A spirit of welcoming**

The experience of being a refugee is an offence against a person's dignity. That is why we answer by insisting on this dignity.

Welcoming work asks people to open up their hearts and homes both to giving and to receiving. The true service is marked by faithfulness. The service that is born from the encounter and from the accompaniment demands a spirit that contains the following:

### ***A spirit of integration***

The refugees offer us the possibility of living a new world, in which each of us has a place to welcome and to be welcomed: religious members, refugees, secular, brothers and sisters of other confessions, people in search of faith and a meaning to life.

Under the surface of difference of opinions lies a profound communion of spirit based on the crucial mission of accompanying and serving refugees. This spirit becomes even more apparent in times of crisis. There are even cases of people who end up offering their lives to the service of others. In many groups, communion beyond any differences is celebrated in the daily Eucharist.

In the conditions of shelter or war, for example in East Timor, the Eucharist was a public symbol of the daily bread in the struggle for freedom of an oppressed people. In other situations, refugees have celebrated the Eucharist while rockets fell on their settlements and houses.

When a refugee manages to abandon their country and requests asylum and protection in another country, their destination is usually a refugee camp and not the integration into the society of that welcoming country, which condemns them to live their lives in exile in conditions that are less than ideal.

It is vital that we promote a debate on whose responsibility it is to ensure that the refugees have all their human rights without any kind of discrimination, included in the universal rules and regulations, and not only those which are proposed in the humanitarian laws and regarding refugees.

### ***A spirit of reconciliation***

Very often people who work with refugees are asked to serve in places where there is a crucial need for reconciliation: between the groups of refugees and displaced and those who displaced them, or between those who return and the population that receives them. Authentic spirituality must include the ability to say “I am sorry” and forgive and find inner peace which offers a presence that cures.

Education also plays a part in encouraging peace, justice and reconciliation: schooling implies a process of socialisation which gives the refugees the necessary knowledge to live together in a community.

It is a force of integration which not only gives social stability, but also teaches them to learn, to do, and to develop personally. Without education, the self-esteem of the young is reduced, and at the same time they feel they have not had any opportunities in this life. That is why education must be considered as a vital and essential part of the emergency aid for refugees and the internally displaced.

### ***An attitude of searching***

Some people see discernment as an intuitive response of a heart that loves and prays. Others think of regulations, a logical process which is united with prayer, of comforting and grief. A heart that discerns is necessary everyday and sometimes requires a process in common with other people.

In what parts of the world should we intervene, what needs of the refugees should we undertake; how should we serve: they are all decisions. Hollenbeck made a list of priorities when the demands enter into conflict and these can help us to decide: *The needs of the poor have priority over the rich, the freedom of those dominated over the freedom of the most powerful, the participation of the marginal groups over the conservation of a social order that excludes them.*

The serious and prolonged physical, mental and psychosocial consequences due to the depriving of human rights for the forcibly displaced people, especially among women, children, the elderly refugees, those who request asylum should be treated urgently. 44% of children, in 2000, had access to primary education. However, only 3% of children under ACNUR, aged between 12 and 17 received an education, either occupational or secondary.

Many of the internally displaced people are not protected or attended to by ACNUR or other UN organisations. Also, the protection mandate of ACNUR has emphasised legal protection, often in detriment to the protection of economic, social and cultural rights. The everyday use of detention places a doubt on whether the rights of those requesting asylum are protected.

The humanitarian organisations who work with refugees find that we have more and more difficulty in ensuring the funding of our projects. This is partly due to the increase in the number of displaced people and their needs, but it also has to do with very little willingness on the part of some rich nations to become committed with development aid and with the programmes of the humanitarian action.

### *A Search for justice*

To work for the cause of the refugees, to defend their rights requires the knowledge and analysis of the situations, bravery and passion for justice. It also requires the humility of knowing that different tasks require different virtues. Perseverance and the ability to confront failure is necessary. It requires vehemence, but not fanaticism.

Probably, more than anything else we need generosity to encourage others, whether they are refugees or humanitarian workers, inasmuch as we are fighting to understand the causes, the corrupt structures, the selfishness and we identify solutions.

*We have seen that conflicts are the main reason for forced displacement. What is also clear is that both conflict and wars mainly take place in under-developed regions. People abandon their territory, fleeing from the extreme hunger and under development which leads to an unbearable and unacceptable existence. It is, in fact, a question of injustice because, in this historical moment, the gap between the developed world and the under-developed world, or between the rich and the poor is getting wider and wider.*

***Wait against all hope (Rom 4:18)***

*The most beautiful gift for people in exile is the hope for peace, wrote Miriam, an African refugee. To steal this hope from someone is a horrible act, the human spirit dies. Do everything that is in our hands to keep hope alive for everybody, be thankful for the small gifts of life each day, add a touch of joy to a life in exile: these are the tasks that God has entrusted us with.*<sup>iii</sup>

*The return home, whether it is during the preparatory stage, or during the return and reintegration process. With the return, they are no longer refugees, but they continue to be people in need of protection, as they are still out of their homes. Those who return after a conflict and the rehabilitation and reconstruction that accompanies the transition process which goes from war to peace, require time, skill, political willingness, solid financial support and a great deal of resourcefulness. Today, the most important repatriation or resettlement process is taking place in Angola, encouraged by the peace process, which has advanced since the ceasefire in April 2002, after thirty years of war. Spread out throughout the whole of the southern Africa, hundreds of thousands of Angolan refugees are getting ready to return to their homeland after this long exile.*

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<sup>iii</sup> CCOGHLAN, D., *God in exile. Towards a shared spirituality with the refugees*. IRS, Rome 2005.

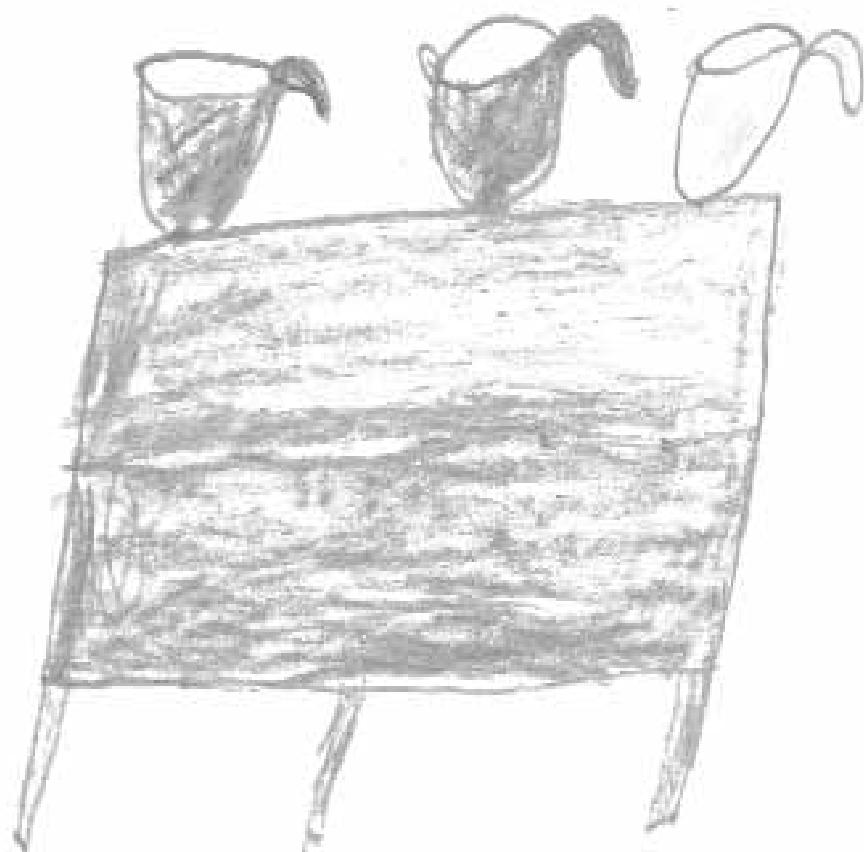
## Chapter 2

### Liberia and the challenge of the internally displaced people reintegration

Renaud de Villaine.

JRS Liberia Advocacy and Communication Officer.









## The Liberian Context

Liberia is the first African Republic founded in 1847 by freed American slaves, repatriated from the United States by philanthropic foundations, such as the American Colonisation Society. The country remained independent while almost all the African continent was colonised by European nations. However, the descendants of the freed slaves ruled the country in a way which excluded the indigenous population from access to power and from the benefits of economic growth. Native Liberians (as opposed to Americo-Liberians) gained the right to vote only in 1946. Despite the declared efforts of the Tubman (1944-1971) and Tolbert (1971-1980) presidencies in favour of the recognition of their rights, they remained discriminated against.

In 1980, Samuel K. Doe, a sergeant of the Liberian Army with native origins, organised a coup and took power after having brutally assassinated President Tolbert and some of his collaborators. This coup inaugurated an era of violence in Liberia. Corruption, mismanagement and repression were characteristics of the ten years during which Samuel Doe was in power before being overthrown by a rebellion launched in 1989 by Charles Taylor.

Like his predecessor, Samuel Doe was tortured and murdered in 1990 by one of Taylor's former lieutenants. The civil war, which was characterised by massive human rights violations and systematic recruitment

of child soldiers, involved about half a dozen factions fighting for control of Liberian government and resources. A semblance of peace returned to Liberia in 1996 with the intervention of a peace-keeping force sent by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Largely through fear and intimidation, Charles Taylor won the elections organised in 1997, inaugurating years during which terror and a high level of corruption reigned over the country. By trying to destabilise the region, Charles Taylor incurred the anger of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire which launched rebellion movements, the LURD and the MODEL, to overthrow him. This new phase of violence and abuses ended in 2003 when Charles Taylor was forced to step down and leave for exile in South Nigeria, after being indicted for war crimes by the Special Court of Sierra Leone.

The peace agreement signed in Accra in August 2003, putting an end to a conflict which killed an estimated 250,000 Liberians, was followed by the deployment of 15,000 soldiers of the United Nation Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The mandate of this largest UN mission in the world was to secure the country and lead the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process of the rebel groups. In parallel, the peace agreement put in place a transitional authority, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), led by the businessman Charles G. Bryant. Despite accusation of corruption, the NTGL filled its main mission: guiding the country towards election in a two-year time.

On 23 November 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president of Liberia after credible and peaceful polls. The election of this qualified 67 year old woman as the first female president of an African country has brought great hope for the stabilisation of Liberia. However, the tasks ahead Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf, to bring durable peace and sustainable development in the country, are numerous.

Even though the security situation in Liberia is generally calm and stable, sources of unrest remain. The DDR process, which officially ended in October 2004, had not reached the results expected. If an estimated 100,000 ex-combatants have been disarmed, there is still 1 weapon for

every 3 men in Liberia. The dearth of reintegration programs contributed to the re-recruitment of hundreds of ex-fighters, including children, by the Ivorian and rebel forces during 2005. Claiming not having received the UN compensation promised after the cease-fire in 2003, some ex-combatants have occupied rubber plantations, creating constant tensions with local communities. In August, the Government, backed by UN peacekeepers repossessed Guthrie plantation in Bomi County from 500 former rebels.

Criminality is also rising in Monrovia. In a country with 85% rate of unemployment and 80% of its population living on less than 1 US dollar per day, young people, without any prospect for the future, are tempted to swing in criminal activities and joined the criminal gangs, which terrorise some parts of the Liberian capital.

To face these security challenges, the Liberian National Police is reorganised and trained by UNMIL Police elements. In June, the arm embargo was eased in order to provide policemen with pistols. In parallel, the recruitment of the 2,000 members of the new Army was started in late 2005. Their training will be funded by the United States, which has contracted DynCorp, a private security company, to conduct it.

More generally, the whole administration needs to be reorganised and its credibility, jeopardised by years of rampant corruption and mismanagement, restored. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has repeated her intention to fight actively against corruption. To break with the practices of the transitional government, she ordered all political appointees by the NTGL to resign with immediate effect and she commissioned an audit of the two-year term of the NTGL. In order to enhance transparency in the granting of Government contracts and concessions, she declared null and void all existing forestry concessions granted to timber companies and former administrations. These measures were coupled with commitment from the new government to implement the Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP) imposed by the international community in September 2005 to fight against endemic corruption. In application of the plan, foreign financial experts have been placed, with co-sign powers, within the National Bank of Liberia, the Finance Ministry and other revenue generating agencies.

The Judiciary system has also suffered from corruption practices for many years. It is jeopardised by a lack of qualified personnel and it remains dysfunctional throughout the country. Most of the inmates in Liberian prisons are being held in pre-trial detention, waiting during extended periods of time for their cases to be judged. Prisons and detention centres continue to operate below international standards with overcrowded cells and lack of food and water for detainees.

In a more general sense, the culture of impunity remains throughout the country. Perpetrators of serious war crimes and crimes against humanity during war time have not been held accountable for their past abuses. Former warlords continue to occupy key positions in Liberian institutions; such as Prince Johnson, who brutally murdered the president Doe in 1990, and Adolphus Dolo, formerly known as “General Peanut Butter”, both currently senators. However, some positive moves were recently recorded. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was launched in 2006. The role of this commission is to record narratives of victims of abuses during the war, as well as of perpetrators, and to issue recommendations on how Liberia can collectively compensate for the past. This is a first step in addressing impunity, even though the Commission has no power to dispense justice.

In March 2006, responding to international pressures, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf officially asked for the extradition of Charles Taylor from Nigeria, where he was enjoying a luxurious exile, to Sierra Leone in order to face 11 counts, including war crimes and human rights abuses, before the Special Court of Sierra Leone. The former Liberian leader was transferred to Sierra Leone at the end of March. After the International Criminal Court in The Hague agreed to host the trial and Great Britain accepted to jail him if he was convicted, Charles Taylor was finally sent to Netherlands on 20th June to be judged. However, he still has supporters in Liberia. His former party, the National Patriotic Party (NPP), is represented in the Liberian Congress. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Edwin Snowe, is for example a NPP representative.

The Liberian economy has been devastated by years of conflict. Although it is richly endowed with water, mineral resources (iron,

gold, diamond, barite, kyarite, manganese, bauxite, and chromite), forests (Liberia has the second largest rubber plantation of the world, exploited since 1926 by the American firm Firestone) and a climate favourable to agriculture, Liberia remains one of the most under-developed countries in the world. It does not even appear in the classification of countries according to Human Development Indicators.

Roads, vital for communication and economic development, are generally in bad shape. If UNMIL is fixing some of them to facilitate the transportation of humanitarian assistance throughout the country, it however remains a first aid intervention. Most of the work, as well as the maintenance of the repaired roads, will be the task of the new government. The World Bank recently announced that it would commit 20 million US dollars to a fund to rebuild Liberia's broken infrastructure. Electricity is lacking in the whole country. The light provided every night in the main streets of Monrovia since the Liberian Independence Day on 26 July, should not hide the importance of the reconstruction work in this area. The previous transitional government reckoned that restoring the system to full working order is likely to take three or four years and could cost 200 million US dollars.

The country's total debt is estimated at 3.7 billion US dollars while the country is still subject to an international embargo on diamonds and timber, its main exploitable resources. Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, head of the World Bank, asserted that the World Bank was moving ahead to get the debt clearance done from its organisation side and was assisting the other monetary and banking institutions to do the same. Regarding the economic sanctions, the international community is waiting for the security situation to be improved as well as for seeing results of the new government efforts to eradicate corruption before lifting the embargo on diamonds and timber.



## The Challenge of the Reintegration of Internally Displace People

In this context, IDP camps were declared officially closed in April. This measure, celebrated by Liberian authorities and UNMIL officials, put an end to a return process that started in October 2004 and assisted almost 320,000 Liberians to come back to their communities of origin. In addition to them should be added the estimated 80,000 refugees already repatriated from neighbouring countries by UNHCR. The UN agency announced in February its intention to repatriate by the end of the year 100,000 of the estimated 180,000 refugees living mainly in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

The great majority of returnees express their happiness to be back home. *"There is nowhere better than home"* is a sentence always repeated in the villages of the hinterland. Returnees especially enjoy their new freedom of movement. When they were in camps, they suffered from the poor security situation. Women especially faced the threat of being harassed and raped every time they moved inside the camps. The presence of relatives in return communities and the will to start a new life with their families are also mentioned by former IDPs as good reasons for returning. On the contrary, the return assistance received from UN agencies, composed of food, non food items and a small incentive of 5 dollars per person, is in no case presented as a factor to come back. Some IDPs have even returned without having waited to receive the promised return package.

Many returnees complained about the small transportation assistance they got, which sometimes forced them to sell a part of their return package or to do small jobs to gather the amount of money necessary to reach their home. Only vulnerable persons were trucked back home. Similarly, many people complained that the return package was not enough to start a new life. They especially regretted the absence of agricultural tools and seeds to do farming. To that extent, seeds and farming tools distributed by some humanitarian organizations, such as

the International Red Cross Committee (ICRC), were particularly appreciated in return areas.

However, food insecurity remains a great matter of concern throughout Liberia. Only 20% of the population consumes adequate levels of food<sup>1</sup>. The majority of Liberians have unsatisfactory consumption patterns characterised by less food diversity and a low frequency of daily food intake. Childhood malnutrition is high with 39% of children under five stunted, 86% of children between 6 to 23 months anaemic and 53% deficient in vitamin A<sup>2</sup>. Returnees only started to farm this year. The first harvest, which will occur in September-October, may improve the situation.

Because of the food shortage, the construction or rehabilitation of houses is consequently delayed, people being focused instead on looking for the means to pay for food. Regarding shelter, zinc distribution programmes are being run by humanitarian organisations. In many communities, people however regret that such distributions were made at the early stage of the return process and only targeted vulnerable people, creating sometimes a feeling of frustration for some.

31%<sup>3</sup> of the population has access to safe water. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has promised that by 2009, every Liberian town and major village will have at least one clean water source. In addition, only 25% of Liberians have access to adequate sanitation<sup>4</sup>. Regarding health, communities suffer from the lack of clinics or, when there is one, of medicine. Only 35% of the necessary medical structures are currently operational throughout the country. As a result, more than 75% of the population has no access to referral care services such as obstetric care<sup>5</sup>. Health indicators are disastrous. Average life expectancy in Liberia is 41 years old. Child (157 for 1,000) and maternal mortality (580 for 100,000) rates are of the highest in the world<sup>6</sup>. 10% of the population is currently dying of malaria each

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<sup>1</sup> UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) 2006.

<sup>2</sup> UN CAP 2006.

<sup>3</sup> UN CAP 2006.

<sup>4</sup> UN CAP 2006.

<sup>5</sup> UN CAP 2006.

<sup>6</sup> UN CAP 2006.

year. The lack of clean water improves the risk of diseases like diarrhoeas or cholera. A recent UNICEF report names diarrhoea and cholera as “two of the biggest child killers,” with diarrhoea responsible for nearly a quarter of all deaths of children under 5. Sexually transmitted illnesses are also reported to be on the increase in the hinterland since the return of displaced people. The multiplication of cases of tuberculosis tends to show it. The prevalence of HIV/Aids in Liberia is estimated to be around 8.2%<sup>7</sup>.

As for education, the return of many children from IDP camps has highlighted the lack of school buildings and materials (notebooks, pencils, registration cards...) in regions of return. Three quarters of schools in Liberia were damaged during the war<sup>8</sup>. Many teachers throughout the country are volunteers. Those who are on the government payroll are not regularly paid. Only 20% of the teachers in public primary schools are qualified to teach<sup>9</sup>. School fees and the cost of uniforms are always presented as obstacles to sending children to school. Of an estimated 55% of the population who are school age, 45% have no access to education<sup>10</sup>. In some cases, children who returned from IDP camps could not finish the academic year. In addition, adult returnees always ask for adult literacy programmes to be developed, as they especially appreciated this assistance in the camps. The adult literacy rate in Liberia is estimated to be 37% – very low in comparison to the average for sub-Saharan Africa, which is around 61%.

Also of primary concern is the increase of domestic violence in return communities. This is a sensitive issue that women are always reluctant to report. Returnees always justify such a rise by stress and post-war trauma. Food shortages were cited as well as being an incessant source of disputes between husbands and wives. In addition, women are now the majority in return communities because of the large number of men killed during the conflict. They always sustain families by doing gardening, odd jobs or running small businesses. In some communities, men

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<sup>7</sup> UN CAP 2006.

<sup>8</sup> UN CAP 2006.

<sup>9</sup> UN CAP 2006.

<sup>10</sup> International Rescue Committee, *Leveraging Learning: Revitalising Education in Post-Conflict Liberia*, 2006.



accept this situation with difficulty. Some say that they feel challenged by women, a feeling that may explain the rise of domestic abuses.

Another challenging issue is the lot of vulnerable people in return communities. Most of them are old, handicapped (blind, paralysed...), orphans and, as mentioned above, single mothers, even though, in most communities, single mothers are not seen as vulnerable persons. On the contrary, they take care of the vulnerable people of their families. There is rarely any community initiative to assist vulnerable people. They are sustained by family members or by the generosity of neighbours when they do not have any family. There are also many cases of vulnerable people who have not received any assistance from humanitarian organisations, showing a lack of tracing of the vulnerable individuals from the displaced camps to the return communities.

Despite these numerous challenges ahead, the experiences that people had during their displacement feed hope for the rebuilding of return communities. Returnees unanimously acknowledge the benefit of the skills training courses that they attended in IDP camps. They also recognise how the experience of destitution and displacement taught them the importance of community initiatives. In camps, they were encouraged by humanitarian organisations to gather and organise themselves together. Women in particular learned to develop common initiatives. Last but not least, when living in camps, former IDPs learned how to interact with people from other ethnic groups. If taken into account by the government, UN agencies and NGOs, these many factors can contribute to the sustainable development and the consolidation of peace in Liberia.

The IDP return process might have officially ended with the official closure of the camps in April. As for the reintegration process of former displaced population, it has just started.

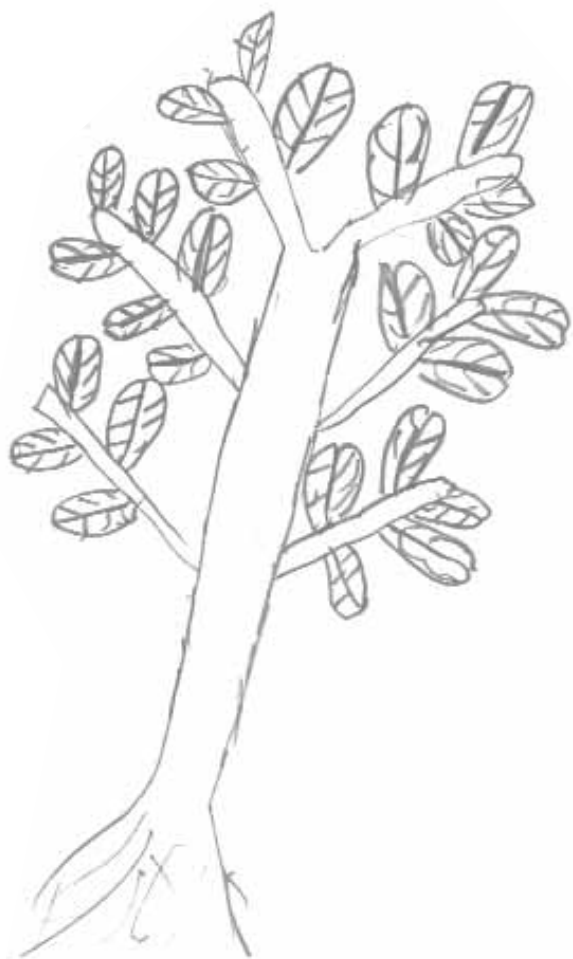


# Chapter 3

## Sketching the future

Eduardo J. Bofill Tortosa.  
JRS Liberia Psychologist.







## The Context

Liberia is gradually trying to overcome its 14 years of war which have devastated the country. Without having any access to the basic comforts such as water and electricity, quality of life has actually become a battle of true survival. Over 1,000,000 people had to leave their homes, fleeing from the consequences of an armed conflict in which boys, girls, adolescents and young people have sadly played a major role. “Thousands of children have become victims of murder, rape and sexual humiliations, kidnappings, torture, forced to leave their homes and work in the different rival factions. (...) But not only did they bear witness to the numerous violations of human rights, they were also forced to carry out many of these acts themselves<sup>1</sup>.”

In the province of Bong, two hours from the capital Monrovia, we find one of the largest centres for internally displaced people in the country, with more than 120,000 grouped together in seven displaced camps. They flocked here escaping from the war stricken region of Lofa, in the north of the country and the origin of the rebel offensive against Taylor. These people, who were used by both the government army and the rebel forces to fight, carry the soldiers’ equipment, cook, or, in the worst scenarios, used to satisfy the sexual needs of the soldiers, had

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<sup>1</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, *How to Fight, How to Kill, Child Soldiers in Liberia*. February 2004 Vol. 16, No. 2 (A).

no other option than to flee if they wanted to save their lives or dignity, leaving behind their family and friends. The shortage of food and spreading of diseases saw many of these people die before reaching the displaced camps.

JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service) set up public schools in the displaced camps in Bong, as well as the MOE (Ministry of Education); they also offered occupational training programmes to young people and adults. One of these camps, in which JRS installed its activity, was the Salala Internally Displaced Camp, in which around 30,000 people lived for around three years.



## **The Salala Camp for the Internally Displaced**

JRS took the responsibility of running the two public schools that existed at the Salala Camp for the Internally Displaced (as in the rest of the camps for the displaced in the area), guaranteeing a free and non-discriminatory access to an education, which many of these children had never had. Let us not forget that in Liberia, public education is by no means free. Between the two schools, called Salala 1 and Salala 2, more than 3,000 people attended each course, in two sessions: in the morning, from 8 to 12, we received the youngest members, grouped into two levels, ABC (4-6 year-olds) and KG (6-9 -year-olds); while at midday, from 12.30 to 16.30, the older children were divided up into different levels from Grade One up to Grade Nine.

The building that houses the school was built with the same materials as all the other constructions in the camp, in other words, a combination of sticks, mud and plastic which, every so often, a storm would demolish. The classes were then put on hold to give way to one of the main cross activities at the school: the task of reconstruction by the actual pupils and teachers themselves. Everyone from the youngest to the oldest pupils helped to restart the classes in a record time, the

older children helped to reconstruct the mud walls and the younger pupils fetched all kinds of sticks... the whole school community took part in the same educational project.

Inside each class, there were not enough desks to go round and so the pupils had to improvise some of the seating with wooden sticks, or even sit on the floor. There was very little school equipment, sometimes non-existent and teachers had to develop incredible exercises of creativity to make the children pay attention to the lesson everyday, without any materials and even enough physical space.

The educational work that we carry out at JRS in the schools, which is essentially based on personal proximity and accompaniment, could not and would not disregard the traumatic experiences which have been endured by many of these children, a fact which seriously affected their feelings and the way they thought. Education is not only an instructive task, it is essentially a way of understanding oneself, and at the same time, understanding the world in which we live: open, flexible, firm in the defence of human rights and, especially, communicative in the way it solves conflicts. And that is why we decided to introduce, as part of our teaching project, a pilot programme into Salala 2 on guidance and accompaniment of the trauma (*Counseling and Trauma Healing*), in an attempt to tackle in the present the painful experiences of the past, as a way of opening up new, and yet not easily broken, horizons for the future.



## The Project

Our first step was to discover the best way of “accompanying” the present moment in which the majority of children at the camp found themselves, and which had to do with the psychological displacement that was already taking place, and which was prior to the imminent

physical displacement: the return. News about the return of the displaced to their places of origin brought back old wounds, as well as dreams which had remained hidden away, on many occasions, behind the fear of returning to a place from which they had once had to escape.

We had learnt that in conflicts such as the one in Sierra Leone, drawing had served as a way of “modelling” and expressing many of the fears and insecurities of a large number of children which had been forced to become soldiers. Fátima Miralles<sup>2</sup> worked on this project and showed how through drawing one could, at a personal level, put their lives in some kind of order after all the chaotic experiences they had undergone; and also at a social level, drawings became an indicator and denunciation of the context that had caused the drama. Likewise, Doctors Without Borders, working with Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone<sup>3</sup>, had expressed how, through their communication, they had managed to soften the experiences of suffering enough to be able to create some kind of personal and social reconciliation.

It was then that we thought that drawings could be useful to establish some kinds of personal experiences:

- a. *Giving a form to the experiences to which they still do not have any words; through it, we could.*
- b. *Open up a window to the future which would not be menacing, and especially which could help.*
- c. *Denounce the social context of the violence in which many still live.* Clearly, these had to be our objectives.

However, we also wanted any initiative which we introduced to have a social outlook. This outlook meant that we had to be capable of taking this project out onto the street, onto the streets of the internally displaced camp and also onto the streets of those who can influence the lives of these people in any particular way. In one and in the other, along the pavements or in the mud roads, we aimed to go beyond a

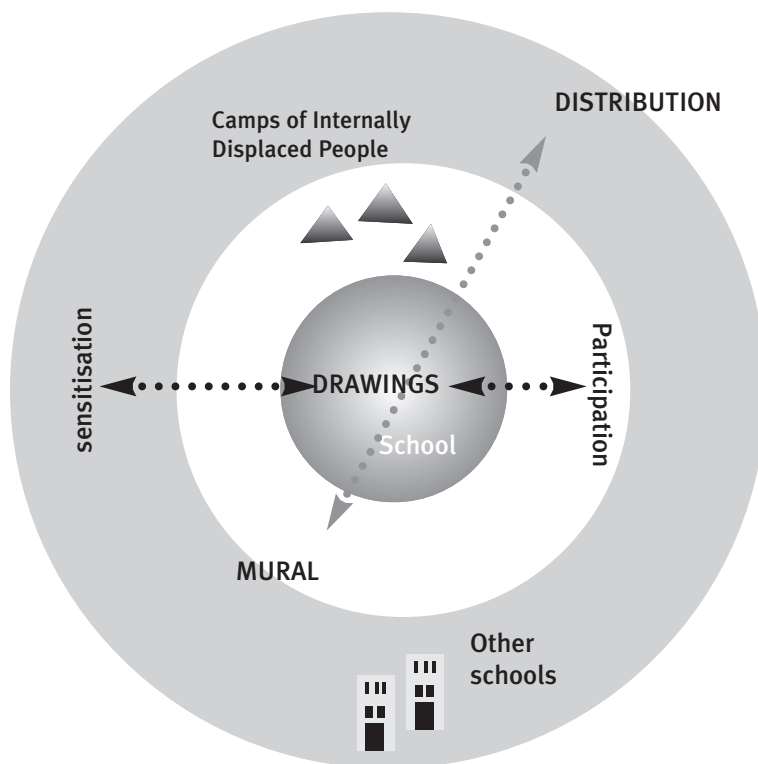
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<sup>2</sup> F. MIRALLES, J.M. CABALLERO, *I didn't want to do it: children forced to be soldiers in Sierra Leone speak out through drawings*. UPCO, Madrid 2002.ges nº 132.

<sup>3</sup> MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES, *Healing Group*. Messages nº 132.



sometimes stigmatised personal answer, encouraging participation, awareness and sensitization, as an inescapable step towards a transformed and long-lasting action.



### The activity: Sketching the future

There were two main tasks to be considered: firstly, to organise an activity which all the children who attended the Salala 2 could benefit from, which meant working with more than 1,500 people of different ages; secondly, how to go beyond the mere individual limits. It was obvious that by extending the activity to the whole of the school we had to adapt

it to the different ages, to get the most from its possibilities. To do so, we used the organisational structure of the actual school, which in itself provided a division of two age groups: the pupils from the morning (ABC and KG) and those from the afternoon (Grade 1-Grade 9).

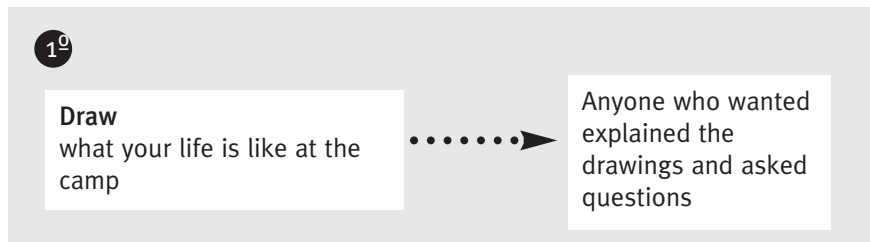
The second objective, to go beyond the individual borders, would be achieved by designing a project in two different phases for each of the groups:

- The older pupils (Grade 1-9) would first each be confronted with their own expression, their own drawing; and would later have the possibility of seeing, observing, comparing and talking about what they had done with other classmates.
- With the younger pupils (ABC-KG) we would base the task on their own drawings and then present an open exhibition to the rest of the inhabitants of the internally displaced camp.

But what were they going to draw? It was clear in our minds that we were going to offer them the possibility of expressing whatever they wanted to about their lives, without us previously putting any emphasis on violence, the losses... They would be the ones responsible for choosing what was most important and significant, and we were not going to force the expression of something they did not want to express. That is why we found the result of the drawings even more significant: the deep-rooted presence of violence, even when the war had ended two years before.

## Stage 1: Drawing

ABC-KG



Therefore, for the youngest pupils, grouped together in ABC (10 classes) and KG (8 classes), we decided to ask them to draw something about their life at the camp, paying special attention to the **ludic** aspect of the activity, a form of **expressing** their feelings and day-to-day experiences.

The main objective was exactly that: to facilitate a play and fun context which would serve as a net in which to place their experiences. We planned an activity with each class in one single session of about an hour (in some cases, because of the explanation of some of the drawings it lasted a little longer), in order to avoid making it excessively long and not to achieve the climate and acceptance we had wanted. Also, by performing the activity in one single session, we avoided an additional effort for which we are still not prepared. It was important to open and close the activity in the same session where evolutionarily consequential thinking has not been reached.

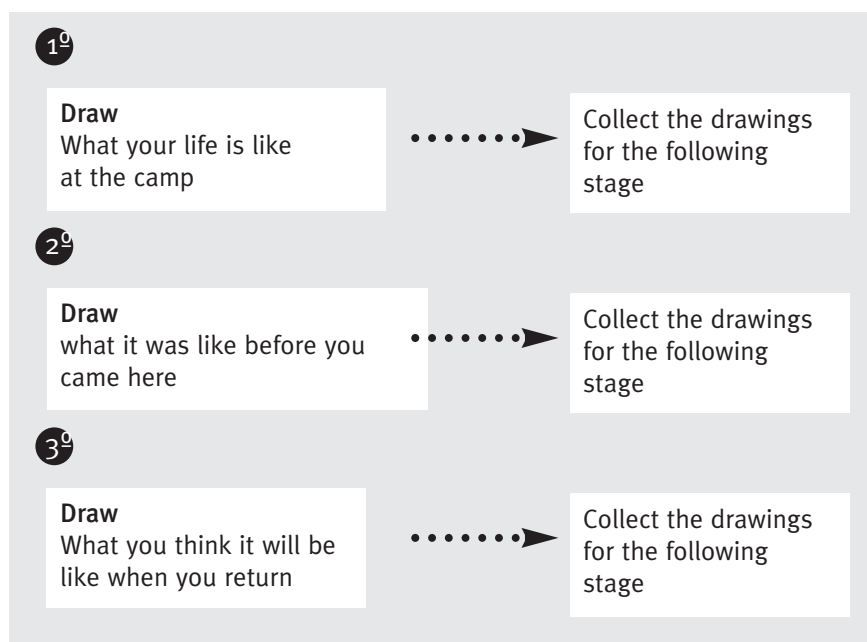
During the activity we had to help some children draw, the teachers told us they were not used to it; we approached them and started drawing lines on the sheet with the coloured pencils, without any shape, and then encouraged them to do the same... The majority, after thinking about it for some time, started to imitate what we were doing. It was also surprising to see how they drew the shape of a person with their legs completely stretched out along the floor. It was one of the teachers who revealed the meaning to us: this was one of the positions

that they were taught in the military training camps in order to move without being seen.

There was one question that started to take shape from the violence expressed in the drawings: why did they continue drawing scenes of war when they were asked about their life in the internally displaced camps?

## Grade 1 - 9

However, with the older pupils, distributed into nine different levels (16 classes), working in different sessions did not pose a problem, instead it was something we could use to reach more private personal areas.



And so, for three consecutive weeks, we asked each of the groups to draw something about their current experiences and way of life, past experiences, and finally, what they think their future will be like. Three

different drawings with which they expressed something that had not been very easy to accept, but also their wishes and fears for the future; three different drawings with which they could give a certain sense and structure to the events they had lived through, building up a certain logic within those specific facts, incidences, in many cases fragmented: their **biography**, their identity.

Some of the afternoon groups were very large, more than 100 people trying to draw in a very small area, some on the floor, others did not even have anything to put the paper on... However, we were surprised how the groups worked in silence throughout the whole activity. They were so immersed in their drawings that even an adolescent mother was drawing while she breast-fed her baby in the class.

Strangely enough, when they drew things about the past they completed the task faster. This lead us to think that perhaps the instruction we had given them produced more than one sense of resistance. The atmosphere was one of laughter and joking between them. Perhaps the attention that was awakened every now and again when they drew about what had happened to them, pushed them towards moments of collective laughter as a form of escape, a way of freeing up all the anguish linked to these memories.

No less surprising were the drawings about their “future”. We found that some people carried on painting scenes of violence: because they did not trust the idea of there being long lasting peace; because for some, the three paintings are the same experience in which, throughout the sessions, they have been gradually going into in greater depth; or perhaps, because some have found themselves trapped by the experiences they have suffered, repeating the same scene time and time again.

## ***Stage 2: Discovering***

In this second stage we carried out two different activities as the expression and production dynamics between the group of older pupils and the younger groups had been very different, but, at the same time, without losing the same objective: to offer the possibility of observing both their drawings and those of their classmates, so that they could see their own experiences in a shared social context, therefore identifying themselves in the experiences of others.

### **Grade 1 - 9**

The older pupils had drawn what their life was like in the country, what it was like before they came here, and how they saw their near future. We displayed the drawings on three different panels, past, present and future and without any prior explanation each class had a session to look at, speak about and compare the three drawings. We then opened up a group discussion about their impressions on seeing these drawings, and we finally ended by asking them to give words to the drawings, in other words, to write the “story” of their lives: what their life is like in the country, what it was like and what it will be like... The words therefore served as a bridge, a link between their past and present experiences, and the dreams and doubts that lay ahead. With some groups we needed more than two hours to complete the task, and we decided to develop the activity outside the school hours, so as not to have to hurry them up...

At the beginning, when they saw the drawings, some of them laughed, they called to each other to look at different ones, and some of them even picked up a pencil and rubber to correct some of the things they had drawn. Only a few pupils remained seated, the majority moved frenetically from one drawing to the next, looking for theirs or pointing out something that attracted their attention. The atmosphere was really epulotic. However, during the subsequent dialogue, some extremely interesting situations began to take place: one girl dared to express how upsetting the memory was after seeing some of the drawings of houses burning down, just now when they had to leave again, saying

that the only thing she wanted to do was to forget; another mentioned the complete opposite, when she saw the drawings she had really felt like going back to Lofa, to her homeland; another girl told us that it was the first time in her life that she had drawn anything, and she really felt like drawing more... some of the drawings expressed their gratitude for giving them this possibility...

But if this dialogue produced a positive result, the experience of writing about their lives exceeded our expectations. We could not imagine them writing for over an hour about their lives, in dialogue with themselves, with their experiences... over an hour of having in their hands what they are, once were, and believe they will be.

### **ABC-KG**

The younger children had only been drawing about their life at the internally displaced camp. Houses, cars, children like them working, and even fighting, very few of them playing, were some of the most recurring subjects that appeared in their drawings. Then, after trying to think of how to give these younger pupils the possibility of looking at their “work”, we came up with the following idea: why not put on an exhibition of the drawings for the whole camp? By doing so, they could see their work on display and through these drawings, we would convey their way of seeing life to anyone who came to visit the exhibition. This way we would also be able to provide an answer to the concern that we had had from the very beginning: the opening up of the activity to the daily reality of the internally displaced camp.

We scanned hundreds of drawings and grouped them together on different panels, depending on the most recurring subjects they had drawn. The title was “My life at the camp”, the inhabitants of the Salala internally displaced camp had the opportunity of seeing what life was like at the camp from the eyes of the younger members of the community, the houses, the work, the cars, even the violence that they still remembered quite vividly, a memory which had yet to be worked on. Through the seven panels the adults were surprised and learnt a great deal from each of the drawings. Also, each person that came to the

exhibition was given the opportunity to express whatever they wanted on a white panel and that, surprisingly, was probably the most popular part of the event. Endless queues appeared, waiting to draw.

Throughout the whole weekend, from 9 in the morning to 5 in the afternoon, thousands of people, young and old, past through the exhibition to see, laugh, draw and identify with the view that the children had of the internally displaced camp. And we became witnesses of short moments full of meaning: three old ladies, who entered the exhibition on their way back from work, and who we had to explain the panels to in their native tongues, because they did not understand English, were pleasantly astonished to see their daily life presented for the first time in drawings; or the boy who, after seeing the drawings, sat down and started drawing on the floor with his hands; or also the groups of older adolescents going from one panel to the next, laughing, and wondering how the younger children were capable of drawing all this; and 30 consecutive hours of people, young and old, drawing on the white panel; and dozens of people who continuously watched others drawing; the boy, who after drawing a house fetched his father to show it to him...

At the end, we were left with the picture of a young child of no more than six years of age who came to the exhibition every day, spending long periods of time speaking to each of the drawings. This was the clearest example of what we were aiming for: for the drawings to open up a personal and social dialogue of the experiences that each person had lived through.

### ***Stage 3: Evaluation***

Once we had finished with all the groups, we carried out an evaluation session. Throughout one whole morning, we instructed all the teachers at the school to perform the same task as their pupils had previously done. These too were displaced people and we asked them to draw about their lives, so that, on the one hand, they could also express their fears and dreams, and the other hand help them to become more aware of this less academic reality but which at the same time was not unimportant and which was present in the lives of their pupils.



We discovered how, for many of them, the future they desired was no more than a return to the past they had lost, and which they yearned for; and as one of the teachers explained, society should move forward instead of contemplating the past, looking towards a place in which they had a role to play; while for others, the signs of progress were something that destroyed their way of life and the understanding of their relationship with their surroundings. In total, more than an hour of comments, questions, opinions, which helped them to perform, as teachers, the same personal experience as their pupils through their drawings, and which was something they valued very positively indeed.



## The Projection

The more than 1000 drawings and sketches, the stories written by the children and the intense personal experience of suffering which on many occasions remains hidden away, has encouraged us, from the very beginning, to think of a way of projecting, of bringing to light all these experiences from the viewpoint and words of their protagonists. And we would like to do this as a way of giving back the dignity to those who live in really undignified conditions. Perhaps, the worst thing about life in the internally displaced camp is not the scarcity of food rations but the constant feeling of being “on loan”, in no man's land, and not being able to fend for yourself.

The material that we collected during the project (drawings, stories, photos) tell us of the lives, the broken lives, the lost lives, but also on how to survive in the midst of so many personal and social fractures. That is why we dare to present this work: firstly because we believe that through the activity of these children, they have been able to recover a part of themselves, secondly, because through this work it is possible to get closer to the lives which are so very different to ours with regards to the opportunities, but which are so close in our wishes and dreams, and finally, because when one encounters injustice with defenceless young children, we cannot remain impassive.



# Past

## James Kesselee (6<sup>o</sup>)

How was your life before coming in the camp? Before coming in the camp I was farmer. In the year 1991 was the time that war state in Liberia. People state killing people with guns and also people dying with hunger.

The time we come in the camp WFP help the displace in Cari IDP camp and Salala IDP camp.

## Arthur Cooper (3<sup>o</sup>)

The story of my life is before coming here the war came. And many people died of no food and on the road coming people was fighting against others. Many of my relatives died in the war and soldier people was killing people who were war enemies and Government was fighting against each other.

## Anonymous

Before the war I was living a good life. Such as I was living with my mother and father, I was attending a good school. Because after school my bigger brother used to help me with my lesson. After studying I'd play with my brother, sister and also friends. Sometimes my father could carry me in his car to his working place or to a walk area. Sometimes in market day he used to take me in the market and buy some clothes for me such as shirt, coat, caps, shoe and other school material. So I was living happily with my parents. This was before the war 1990.



Joseph J. Nuarpah (6<sup>o</sup>)

2000 was the time that we begin our camp living in CARI, people was dying everyday because of hunger. We all were in the camp and we all were in CARI at that time life began to change.

In the year 2002 we began school in CARI. The condition was fine with us. At the time we all were sitting in the camp in CARI we heard the gun sound coming from Gbarnga we began to run to Salala. When we all came in Salala there was no spare place, people were dying in salala.

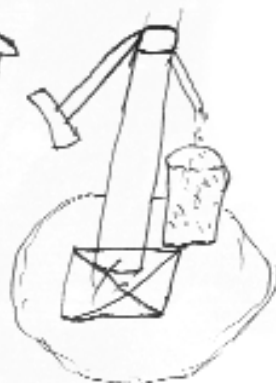
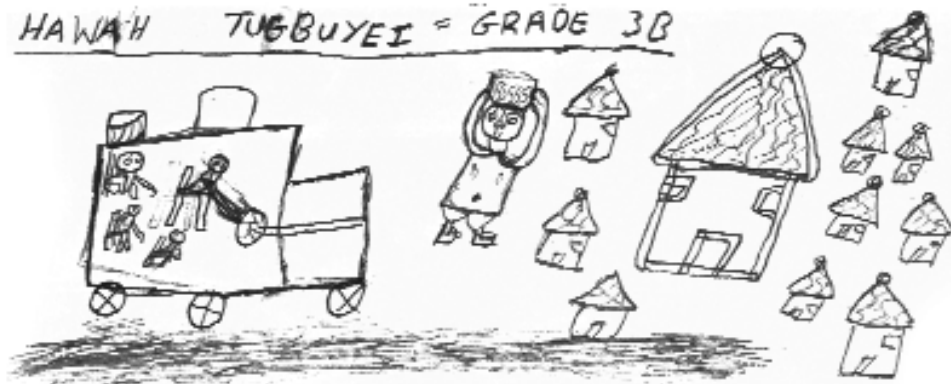
In 1996 was the time we left from Guinea and came to Liberia. We started to vote in 1997 and in 1997 Taylor was in power. He began to carry on some development and the development brought rice for us every month and he was not care for the schooling activities in Liberia. It the time war broke up in Liberia President Taylor began to give order to his soldiers to go in the various school to hung for students in the community to go to fight war that was the condition we face during president Taylor time.

We are free in Salala, I thank God there is no gun sound.

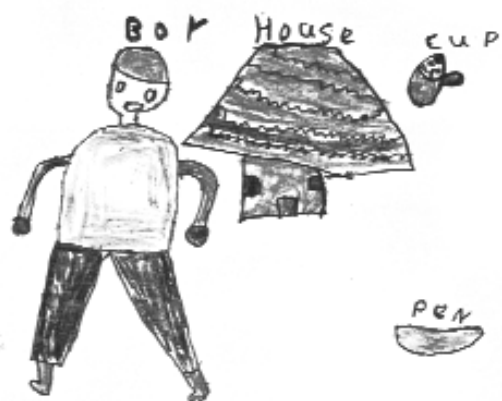
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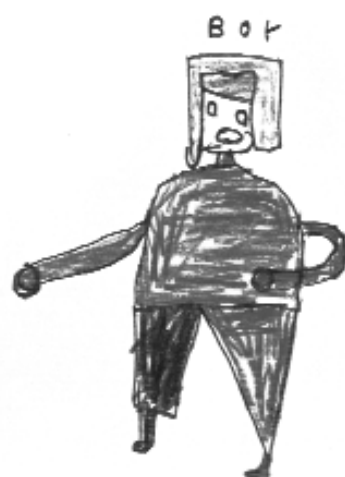
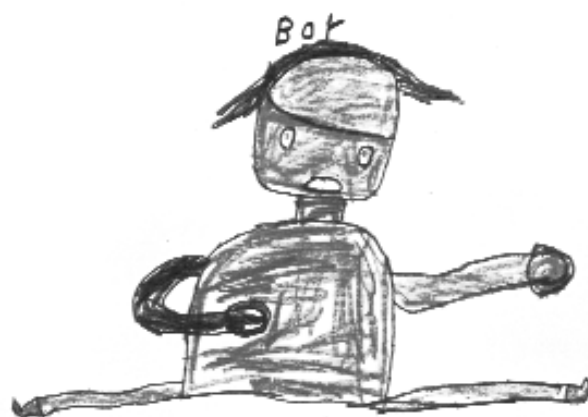
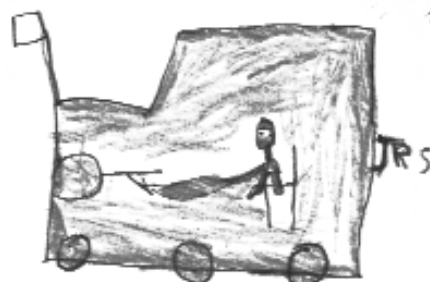
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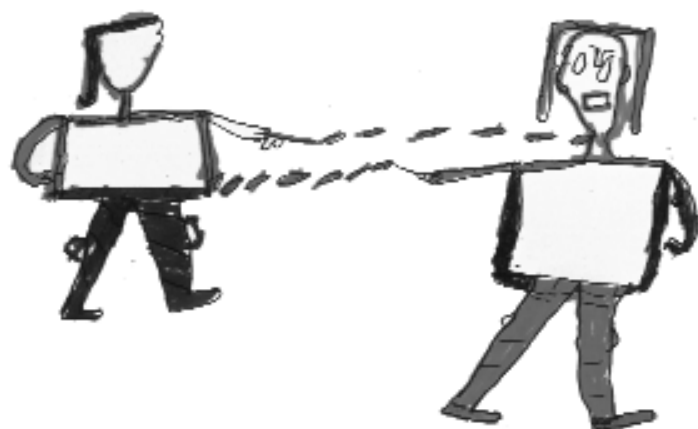


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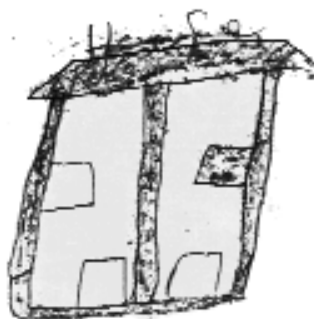
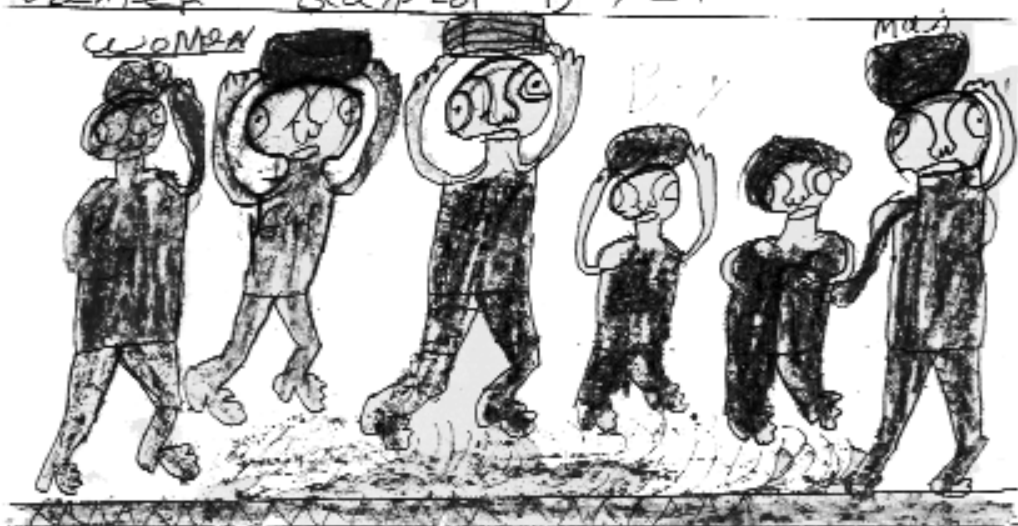








James Gaylor 13 year



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Terry's 4th Quad!

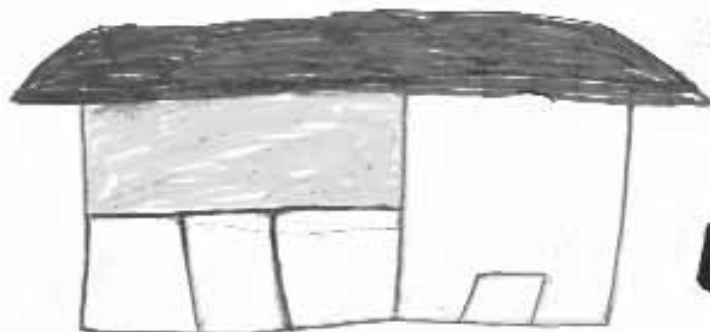
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GUWOR BALLAH Grade 3 B <sup>may</sup>  
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by ACCIDENTS



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YORKPOZUO Johnson KG-4  
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John Togba

