

## NON-STATE ACTORS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF LIBERIAN REFUGEES IN ORU-IJEBU REFUGEE CAMP IN NIGERIA, 1990-2007

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**OLUSESAN ADEWUNMI OSUNKOYA**

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & DIPLOMATIC STUDIES, TAI SOLARIN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, IJAGUN |  
[sesanosunkoya@gmail.com](mailto:sesanosunkoya@gmail.com) / [solaade2007@ymail.com](mailto:solaade2007@ymail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*This paper critically interrogates the role of the non-state actors in the management of Liberian refugees Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp in Nigeria between 1990 and 2007. Nigeria was one of major host countries of Liberian refugees in West Africa in particular and Africa in general during this period of study. The non-state actors played significant roles in the management of Liberian refugees in Oru-Ijebu refugee camp. Through effective collaboration with the Nigerian government as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR), the non-state actors succeeded in managing Liberian refugees in Oru-Ijebu refugee camp in Nigeria. The main non-state actors that played significant role in the management of Liberian refugees in Oru-Ijebu refugee camp in Nigeria during this period were Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and African Refugee Foundation (AREF). These non-state actors provided necessary humanitarian assistance to the Liberian refugees who were housed in Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp in Nigeria during this period. The methodology adopted in the study was historical, thematic, qualitative and quantitative utilizing both primary and secondary sources of data collection.*

**Keyword:** Liberian Refugees, Management, Nigeria, Non-State actors, Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp

### Introduction

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Generally, the displacement of innocent people out of their homeland both within and across the borders is one of the most dramatic episodes in the contemporary world. Although this humanitarian crisis is not a new phenomenon, it took a new dimension since the birth of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in different continents of the world majorly

caused by violent conflicts and environmental challenges such as climate change, desertification and so on. Several scholars and researchers have interrogated population displacement from two major perspectives. They are religious perspective and secular perspective (Osunkoya, 2022:1). The religious perspective of the forceful displacement of people has its origin in the

Holy Scriptures (the Bible and Quran). For instance, the Holy Bible is full of stories of forcefully displaced people occasioned by famine, natural disaster/climate change, persecution and violence. They included Abraham and Sarah displaced by famine (Gen.12:10); Hagar and Ishmael displaced by persecution (Gen.21:14-16); and all of Israel displaced by oppression (Exo.12:41, 2Kings17:23 and 2 Kings24:14-15) (Revised Standard Bible). Also, the Holy Quran reveals evidences of how people were forcefully displaced. For example, Prophet Mohammed (SAW) and his faithful were forced to take refuge in Medina due to religious persecution. The *Hijra* of Prophet Mohammed (SAW) from Mecca to Medina in AD 622 could be regarded as an act of seeking refuge (Holy Quran). The term “refugee” was first coined in 1573, when it was used to describe Calvinists, who fled political repression in the Spanish-controlled Netherlands with their co-religionists and sought refuge in France. However, these refugees were not only defined as victims of persecution; they were also seen as individuals with political, religious, economic or other affiliations that aroused solidarity among those supporting similar interests in other countries and a

corresponding sense of responsibility towards them (Osunkoya, 2017:12).

The secular perspective of population displacement dates back to the earliest days of humanity and continues up till today. There were several examples of forced population displacement in different parts of the world. The initial form of population displacement was majorly caused by violent conflicts, which were both intra and inter-violent conflicts. Russian refugees of the 1917, the Jewish refugees of the 1930s; and those of post-1945 like the Hungarian refugees of the 1950s, the Vietnamese refugees of the 1970s, the Rwandan refugees of the 1990s and the Zimbabwean refugees, dawn to the twenty-first century phenomenon (Osunkoya, 2022:3). One of the violent conflicts in the contemporary times that led to mass population displacement was the Liberian civil war.

We are not interested in the detail analysis of the Liberian Civil War as this has been thoroughly discussed in the literature. Indeed, a number of scholars have interrogated the course and causes of the Liberian Civil War (Ellis, 1995: 165). Our area of interest here is to examine one of the major consequences of the war, that is, the

production of refugees in West Africa. The Liberian Civil War occurred in two major phases. The first phase lasted from 1989 to 1997; while the second phase occurred between 1999 and 2003. During these two phases, a large number of Liberians and nationals of other countries living in Liberia became refugees mostly in West Africa. According to Omeje, the Liberian civil war was the first major regionalised war in the post-colonial West Africa. Within a few years, the war directly and indirectly affected the rest of the Mano River Union (MRU –Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea) and accentuated the destabilisation of the sub-region beyond the Mano River states (Cote d’Ivoire inclusive), making the sub-region a zone of high intensity conflict (Omeje, n.d). Liberia was plunged into its first phase of violent civil war in December 1989 as a result of the invasion of the country by the Charles Taylor’s led National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) through the northern Ivorian border. Taylor’s rebellion, led to the overthrow of the autocratic and repressive rule of then President of Liberia, Sergeant Samuel Doe and his eventual ascension to power in the 1997 after the conduct of the democratic elections (Vinck et al 2011). The restoration of peace to the country in 1996 was the

result of the activities of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Following the successful peace keeping operations of the ECOWAS in Liberia, violence abated leading to the establishment of a ceasefire agreement between the warring factions. Although there are conflicting figures with respect to the number of refugees produced by the war, Cain observes that during this phase of the war, about 750, 000 refugees and more than 1.2 million internally displaced persons were recorded (Cain, 1999:265-307). Similarly, Dick and Boer argue that, the seven years of violence and bloodshed in Liberia caused the death of about 200,000 people out of a pre-war population of 2.8 million, while more than half of the country’s population was forced to flee their homes. Approximately 1.2 million persons were displaced within Liberia, while about 700,000 refugees fled Liberia to neighbouring countries (Dick and Boer, 2001). Also, the UNHCR estimated that 160,000 Liberian refugees were in Cote d’Ivoire, 235,000 in Guinea, 14,000 in Sierra Leone and 17,000 in Ghana at the end of 1996 (UNCHR, 2003).

Nevertheless, the cease-fire of 1996 was short-lived as longstanding and simmering ethnic tension, corruption, persecution and

abject poverty of the people threw the country back into a second civil war in 1999 barely; two years after Charles Taylor was elected as Executive President (Kieh and Klay, 2009). During the five-year civil war (1999-2003), widely described as the country's second phase of civil war, Liberia was besieged by violent confrontations as Taylor's NPFL, the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) struggled for power. The LURD and MODEL were the two major rebel groups formed in the country to force Charles Taylor out of office. The second phase of Liberian civil war caused by these rebel groups produced more refugees, who fled the country to escape the repeated skirmishes between the rebel groups and Charles Taylor's army (Levitt, 2005). The crisis continued until the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003, which led to the attainment of appreciable peace and stability in Liberia (Vinck et al, 2011). According to the estimate of the US Committee for Refugees in 2002, about 80,000 Liberians were internally displaced at the end of 2001 (US Committee for Refugee, 2002). By February 2003, another 6,000 Liberians had fled from Liberia to Sierra Leone, while 30,000 internally

displaced people (IDPs) sought refuge near Monrovia (UNHCR, 2003). During the 14-year civil war in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d' Ivoire, Nigeria and Ghana were host countries of Liberian refugees. The brutal war in Liberia created a humanitarian crisis that threatened the security and stability of the whole sub-region. For example, by November 1990, the number of Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries in West Africa could be seen in the below table.

**Table 1: Host Countries of Liberian Refugees in West Africa as at November 1990**

S/N	Host countries of Liberian Refugees	Number of Liberian Refugees
1	Guinea	311,000
2	Cote d'Ivoire	193,000
3	Sierra Leone	130,000
4	Ghana	34,000
5	Nigeria	6,000
	Total	674,000

**Source:** Maxwell Owusu. (2000). Reluctant Refugees: Liberians in Ghana. *The Journal*, Vol.7, Issue 3,

It is against this backdrop that this paper is divided into four major sections. Section one introduces the discussion and the methodology adopted for the study. The

second section focuses on the emergence of Liberian Refugees and the Establishment of Oru-Ijebu refugee camp in Nigeria. The third part critically examines the non-state actors and the management of Liberian refugees in Nigeria. The last section is the conclusion.

### **Methodology**

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The methodology adopted in this paper is historical, thematic and analytical. Sources of data collection are primary and secondary. The main primary source used in this paper was oral interview. Intensive oral interview was conducted with key informants, which comprised officials of Oru-Ijebu Camp and important personalities in Oru-Ijebu community. The secondary sources include books, journal articles, government publications, newspapers and magazines which were obtained from University Libraries at Lagos, Ago-Iwoye, Ijebu-Ode, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and research websites online. Data collected were subjected to historical analysis.

### **Discussions**

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#### **The Establishment of Oru-Ijebu Refugee Camp and the Emergence of Liberian Refugees Nigeria, 1990-2007**

The problem of refugees in West Africa was one of the major issues that dominated the Nigerian Foreign Policy for the sub-region. From 1990, Nigeria's foreign relations in West Africa took a new dimension. Under the auspices of the ECOMOG, Nigeria has had to intervene again and again in other member states beginning with Liberia in 1990. The first phase of Liberian civil war, which lasted from 1990 to 1997, became a turning point in Nigeria's refugee policy. The bloody insurgency, which quickly degenerated into a vicious civil war was accompanied by mass killings of innocent people, gross violation of human rights, large scale internal displacement and huge flow of refugees across the West African region and beyond. Nigeria became one of the host countries of Liberian refugees in West Africa. It was this development that informed the enactment of Decree (later Act) on 29 December, 1989 aimed at protecting refugees in Nigeria. The primary refugee policy governing refugees in Nigeria is contained in the Federal Government Decree of 1989. In that year, the Federal Government under the leadership of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida issued Decree 52 of 1989 (Act 1989, Cap 244 Laws of the Federation in 1990). The Act incorporated the 1951 United Nations Convention

relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee problems in Africa. The Act prohibited the refusal of entry, expulsion, extradition or return of persons seeking refuge, until the determination of their status. Indeed, Section 1, sub-section 3 stipulates that: No person, claiming to be a refugee within the meaning of this Act who has illegally entered into or is illegally present in Nigeria, shall be expelled, extradited or returned merely by reason of his illegal entry or presence in Nigeria or any part of Nigeria pending the determination of his application for a refugee status.

It was this Act that led to the establishment of a body known as the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR), charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the interest and treatment of persons, who are seeking to become refugees in Nigeria or persons seeking political asylum in Nigeria and other matters incidental thereto. In other words, the NCFR Act provided the legal and administrative framework for refugee management. It also set out guidelines for application and determination of refugee status in Nigeria (NCFR Act). Nigeria successfully domesticated international and

African refugee conventions through the enactment of the NCFR Act. The introduction of the refugee Act in Nigeria contributed largely to the emergence of Liberian refugees in the country from the 1990s. Prior to the enactment of the Act, Nigeria had hosted immigrants from other countries in the sub-region and other parts of Africa, most especially from Benin Republic, Niger Republic, Cameroun, Chad (her immediate neighbours) and Ghana. Although Nigeria was a major host country of Liberian refugees in West Africa, she had few population compared to other countries such as Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast (now Cote d' Ivoire) and Sierra Leone. One major reason responsible for this was that Liberia is not an immediate neighbour of Nigeria unlike Guinea and Sierra Leone (who are members of Mano River Union with Liberia). The largest number of displaced Liberians was found in Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone (Ranard, 2005); with significant few in Nigeria. According to Nmoma, the bulk of Liberian refugees fled in large numbers to Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, while Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Gambia hosted smaller numbers (Nmoma, 1997). There are conflicting figures in the total number of Liberians that became refugees in West

Africa during the 14-year civil war (1999-2003) in Liberia. For instance, while Ranard observes that the Liberian refugees in West Africa swelled to 700,000, **Nmoma argues that** the civil war initially produced 800,000 Liberians as refugees in West Africa (Nmoma, 1997). According to the report of UNHCR about 325,000 of the refugees sought asylum in Guinea, 300,000 in Cote d'Ivoire, 125,000 in Sierra Leone, 8,000 in Ghana, and 1,500 in Nigeria (UNHCR, 2003). UNHCR reported that at the height of the war, 700,000 people fled the country out of an estimated pre-war population of 2.4 million. In addition, an undisclosed number of Liberians were uprooted and displaced within the country (UNHCR, 1999).

The emergence of formal refugee camp in Nigeria was facilitated by the promulgation of Refugee Law in 1989 occasioned by the Liberian Civil War, which led to the influx of Liberian refugees to the country. Evidences from the existing studies reveal that before this time, there was no permanent settlement built for refugees in Nigeria. The need to set up a temporary refugee settlement mainly for the purpose of receiving refugees from West Africa in particular and Africa in general was facilitated by the outbreak of civil war in

Liberia in 1989. As a result of this development, the then Federal Military Government of Nigeria decided to establish a refugee camp (known as Oru Refugee Camp), mainly to receive Liberian refugees in 1990. Although there were Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in some states in Nigeria, the Oru Refugee camp located in Oru-Ijebu, Ogun State was the only major refugee camp in Nigeria that received supports from the governments of Nigeria (Federal and State) as well as local and foreign or international agencies during this period of study. At its initial stage, the camp hosted refugees from Liberia. However, as time went on, especially following the outbreak of civil war in Sierra Leone in 1991, the camp began to host Sierra Leonean refugees. By 2006, the camp had housed about 5000 Liberian refugees, 700 Sierra Leonean refugees and a small group of displaced people from Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad Rwanda, Cote d' Ivoire and Central African Republic (The Guardian, 2006).

The Oru-Ijebu Refugee Camp was established in 1990 at Oru-Ijebu, via Ijebu-Ode in the then Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State. Oru-Ijebu is one of the Ijebu speaking communities in

Ogun state. The camp was set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria, but managed by the National Commission for Refugees (NCR), which functioned directly under the presidency. This site, where the Liberian refugees were settled at Oru-Ijebu was formerly used as a teacher training college. The infrastructures available were rehabilitated in order to provide adequate comfort for the refugees. The camp compound was surrounded by barbed wire, and non-threatening armed personnel guarded the gate. The refugees were housed in dormitories, classrooms and other available building spaces on the camp (Ugwuegbu, 2001:2-3). As time went on refugees from Sierra Leone, DR Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, Cameroon were later brought to Oru camp. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), as at January 2007, there were 8,768 refugees and 676 asylum seekers in Nigeria. Out of these figures 4,158 lived in Oru-Ijebu camp while others were scattered across the nook and cranny of Lagos State. Of the 4,158 refugees in the Oru-Ijebu refugee camp, 3,289 were Liberians, 800 were Sierra Leoneans and 69 were nationals of other African countries (UNHCR, 2007).

The first batch of Liberian refugees to Nigeria arrived by sea via Lagos in 1990. They were later taken to the camp set up at Oru-Ijebu village, via Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State (Ugwuegbu, 2001:1). According to the Nation newspaper, close to 10,000 refugees between 1992 and 2006 flocked Oru-Ijebu refugee camp (Akioye, 2014). A detailed examination of the establishment of the camp is treated later in this chapter. Since the passage of the Refugee Law in 1989, Nigeria has become an important destination country for migrants in the West African region in particular and Africa in general. Although the influx of refugees into Nigeria actually began in the 1990, occasioned by the civil war in Liberia, they were later joined by refugees from Sierra Leone (which was also engulfed in civil war that started in 1991). According to the National Population Commission, available figures indicate that the number of immigrants (refugees inclusive) residing in Nigeria has more than doubled in recent decades, from 477,135 in 1991 to 971,450 in 2005 (NPC, 1991 and Osunkoya, 2017). However, immigrants make up only 0.7 per cent of the total population of Nigeria. The majority of immigrants in Nigeria are from ECOWAS countries specifically from Benin, Ghana, Mali, Liberia and Sierra

Leone. Of the overall number of immigrant stock in the country as at 2007, the refugees constituted a small proportion of 0.9%, with Liberians as the majority (Afolayan, 2009:3).

## **Findings**

### **The Non-State Actors and the Management of Liberian Refugees in Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp**

The role of non-state actors in the management of Liberian refugees in Oru-Ijebu refugee camp during this period cannot be overemphasized. The major non-state actors that partnered with the UNHCR as well as the Nigerian government in the management of Liberian refugees during this period of study in Nigeria were the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), the Justice and Development Peace Commission (JDPC) and the African Refugee Foundation (AREF). Each of these non-state actors as well as their activities in the management of Liberian refugees at Oru-Ijebu Camp would be discussed.

### **The Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) and the Management of Liberian Refugees**

The Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), a major non-governmental humanitarian organisation, was the main

operational partner of UNHCR for the care, maintenance and management of Liberian refugees in Nigeria between 1990 and 2007. Historically, the organization was established by an Act of Parliament of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1960 as an auxiliary of government responsible for disaster management, health care, first aid, youth development, organizational development programmes, social welfare and alternative to violence (This Day, 2008:1). The NRCS became the 86th Member of the National Society of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (now known as International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) on 4 February 1961 (Bola-Solarin, 2007). Its headquarters was formerly in Lagos, but was moved to Abuja, following the relocation of the Federal Capital territory from Lagos to Abuja since 1991. The NRCS, which is a member of International Red Cross (that is now actively working for humanity in 188 countries of the world and regarded as the world's largest humanitarian organization), has over 500,000 volunteers and 300 permanent employees in Lagos; and 36 branches in the country as at 2015 (Onwe, 2015:46-52).

Generally, the mission of NRCS is to assist victims of disaster, implement health and

social welfare programmes and promote humanitarian programmes in Nigeria. Its activities range from emergency interventions during outbreaks of violence and disasters to providing First Aid and assistance to displaced persons, and to providing long-term programmes aimed at improving the situation of the most vulnerable. It acts as an auxiliary to the Nigerian Government in emergency situations. According to Onwe (2015), the driving principles of NRCS are based on humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. He further highlighted the core tasks of the society among which are to:

- Monitor compliance of warring parties with the Geneva Conventions;
- organise nursing and care for the wounded on the battlefield;
- supervise the treatment of prisoners of war and make confidential interventions with detaining authorities;
- help with the search for missing persons in an armed conflict;
- organize protection and care for civil populations; and
- act as a neutral intermediary between warring parties (Onwe, 2015:46-52).

The NRCS participated actively in the management of Liberian refugees in Oru-

Ijebu refugee camp between 1990 and 2007. In fact, her activities began with the inception of Liberian refugees on the Nigeria's soil in 1990. Following the arrival of Liberian refugees at Apapa port, Lagos, it was the NRCS that arranged for their evacuation from the port to Oru-Ijebu (NRCS, 2004:2). The location where the refugees were taken to at Oru-Ijebu in 1990 was identified by Mr Yinka Fashina (Adebanjo, 2016). Following the arrival of the Liberian refugees in Oru-Ijebu camp, there was shortage of accommodation. This development forced some Liberian refugees to use classrooms within the camp as rooms. The major role played by the Nigerian Red Cross Society towards addressing the challenge of inadequate accommodation for Liberian refugees at Oru-Ijebu camp was that they provided 35 big tents and 38 rolls of plastic sheeting for the construction of shelters for the refugees (NRCS, 2004:2). Also, the activities of NRSC were more visible in the areas of the distribution of both food and non-food items; as well as provision of health services to the refugees. The active involvement of NRCS in the management of Liberian refugees in Oru-Ijebu camp was facilitated by the formal agreement between the Society and the UNHCR. As stated in the previous chapter

of this work, a written agreement was signed between the two organisations over the management of Liberian refugees in Nigeria in 1990. The agreement stated the respective agencies' areas of responsibilities to the refugees. For example, while the NRCS was charged with the responsibility of the distribution of food and non-food items, health care services among others, UNHCR comprised funding, shelter and protection. Their activities were reviewed and renewed annually, especially between 1990 and 2007 ((NRCS, 2004:2 and Osunkoya, 2017)

In the area of distribution of food and non-food items, the NRCS received a request from the UNHCR in June 2003 to render assistance to Liberian refugees who sought for asylum in Nigeria (Osunkoya, 2017:24). In that year, a total of about 1,986 Liberians/asylum seekers arrived in Nigeria. These asylum seekers, which included 858 women, 564 children and 564 men were accommodated at the Oru-Ijebu refugee camp (NRCS, 2004:2). Following their arrival, the Lagos office of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies received a letter from the UNHCR office in Lagos, requesting the Federation to assist with food and non-food items for the initial two months of the arrival of the

Liberian refugees. Similarly, on 19 June 2003, in a separate letter sent to the Nigerian Red Cross Society, the UNHCR office in Lagos made an appeal to the National Society to assist some 2,000 Liberian refugees with food and non-food items for a period of one month. NRCS responded positively by undertaking a one-time distribution of non-food items to about 2,000 Liberian asylum seekers at the Oru-Ijebu Camp (NRCS, 2004:2). Notable among major non-food items provided for the Liberian refugees at the Oru-Ijebu camp by the NRCS were first aid kits (20 units); tents (100 big and small size); stretchers (100); plastic sheeting (100 rolls, size 30m x 10m); disinfectant ( 24 tins/4 liters for watsan); and dressing materials (10 boxes) (NRCS, 2004:2).

In the area of health services, the role of NRSC was significant. The NRSC collaborated with the NCFR to run the only clinic in the camp, which was set up by the Federal government. Aside the provision of health education programmes to the refugees within the camp, the agency was in charge of the administration of the clinic. The NRCS had a nurse (who was also a member of the organisation) who worked at the clinic (Opeyemi, 2016). Also, the NRCS had two

or three members of staff (mostly medical attendants) on ground at the clinic for the purpose of assisting the resident Corps medical doctor and the Red Cross nurse (Adebanjo, 2016). Chronic health issues such as caesarean operation that could not be handled at the clinic were referred to Ijebu-Igbo General Hospitals or Ogun State University Teaching Hospital (OSUTH), Shagam (now known as Olabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital-OOOUTH) or Military Hospital Lagos for better treatment (Orebiyi, 2016).

### **Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and the Management of Liberian Refugees**

Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) is another major non-governmental agency that partnered with the UNHCR in the management of Liberian refugees at Oru-Ijebu Refugee Camp. The role of JDPC in the management of Liberian refugees in Oru-Ijebu refugee camp during this period of study could be seen in the areas of education and skill acquisition (Odumosu et al, 2009). Historically, the JDPC is an arm of the Catholic Church set up by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN). The origin of the commission could be traced to January 6,

1967 when Pope Paul VI inaugurated the Pontifical Commission with a definite mandate to carry on the mission of the Church in preaching and working for peace among humanity (Etchegaray, 2002:9). This led to the establishment of the Pontifical Commission at the international level. Following this development, a Pan-African Justice and Peace Conference was held in Lesotho from May 29 to June 3, 1988, where thirty resolutions were passed. Prominent among the resolutions was on the urgent need to establish permanent justice and peace structures at national and regional levels by the different episcopal conferences, especially for those where there were none or where the structures were weak (Etchegaray, 2002:9).

The mandate for the establishment of a Justice and Peace Commission was made more emphatic by Pope John Paul II (1995: 9), in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa. It was in a swift response to these admonitions of the Holy Father that the issues of justice and peace became top priorities on the agenda of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. Several conferences were held by CBCN geared towards the establishment of peace commission (Etchegaray, 2002:9).

Eventually, by the 1990s, a number of Catholic Dioceses (such as Ibadan and Ijebu-Ode Dioceses) decided to set up Justice, Development and Peace Commission. Prior to the year 2000, the JDPC was an independent department in the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, which also served as its national secretariat. Following reorganisation, the JDPC was brought under the Church's Department of Church and Society. The JDPC has a national secretariat (that is the Justice, Development and Peace Committee in the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN)) and is headed by the Director of Church and Society. The secretariat/committee serves as the resource centre for the national JDPC activities and reports to the CBCN on its activities through its director. At the provincial level, the JDPC has a coordinator, while at the diocesan level, each Catholic bishop appoints a JDPC coordinator for the diocese to animate, mobilize, and keep the JDPC effective in the entire diocese. The coordinator could be a priest, a nun, or a lay faithful (Odoemene, A. 2012:51-76). Although there are other lower structures of the JDPC, our interest here lies in Ijebu-Ode Catholic Diocese. The JDPC's corporate mission in Ijebu- Ode Diocese is the "promotion of sustainable and integral

human development, through holistic empowerment approach and enhancing effective structural transformation of the society without any form of discrimination", as stipulated in Article I of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (JDPC Report, 2006).

Although the process of developing western education in the camp was started by the Liberian refugees themselves, it was later taken over by the JDPC. An informal nursery and primary school (which started in the form of private school) was initially developed by the refugees in 1991 (Sigbeku, 2016). The pupils usually gathered in a small room within the camp and were taught by about eight refugees as teachers. The JDPC took over and began the payment of salaries of the refugee teachers, which ranged between #300 and #500 per month. Aside the salary, the refugee teachers were also fed by the JDPC. They provided the pupils with some stationery like pencil, pen, ruler, eraser and exercise books (Ossai, 2016). As time went on, the UNHCR and the Ijebu North Local government approached the Ogun state government for the approval and taken over of the administration of the school. The school, named Liberian Refugee Primary School

was later approved by Ogun state government in 1998 and transformed into a public primary school. Following the taken over of the school by the state government, about five qualified teachers were recruited and posted to the school, with one Mr. Adesanya as the head teacher (Disu, 2016). Meanwhile, the eight initial refugee teachers that taught the pupils were subjected to

proper screening by the Ogun State Primary Education Board, Abeokuta for absorption. At the end of the screening exercise, only two of them were qualified, and were formally employed by the Ogun state government (Aladesua, 2016). The picture of the primary school snapped during field work is shown below.



*Figure 1: Refugee Primary School, Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp*

Figure 1 above is the picture of the primary school built at Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp by the government for the refugees' children. Following the laudable role of JDPC in the promotion of western education among the

refugees in Oru-Ijebu camp, the body was approached by the UNHCR, Nigeria to assist them in implementing some educational programmes designed mainly for refugees (Aladesica, 2016). One of these

educational programmes was the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) Scholarship designed mainly for the support and training of interested refugees in higher institutions. The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (German: Deutsche Akademische Flüchtlings Initiative or DAFI) refers to grants (in form of scholarships) giving to deserving young refugees at universities, colleges and polytechnics in their host countries. The programme has been sponsored by the government of Germany since 1992 (Martin, 2003:80). DAFI was the major higher education scholarship programme pursued in the host countries of Liberian refugees in West Africa. The DAFI programme enables young refugees to continue post-secondary education as well as helps to motivate refugee children to stay in school and succeed academically. The programme was initiated by the Government of Germany in 1992. Through the programme, the government of Germany provides annually almost 100% of the funds used for financing education of the refugees. The programme grants scholarships to interested young refugees at universities, colleges and polytechnics in the host countries, and to some extent, in their country of return. The

DAFI fund is almost the only available support for refugees to acquire tertiary education. The primary objective of the DAFI Programme is to contribute to the promotion of self-reliance of men and women refugees by providing them with a professional qualification towards a gainful employment in future. Generally, the DAFI Programme aims to encourage the development of qualified human resources for the future reconstruction of refugees' home countries upon repatriation, thus supporting greater peace and stability in the concerned regions (DAFI Policy, 2012-2016 and UNHCR, 2011:2). In a nut shell, The DAFI programme aimed to achieve the following:

1. Promote self-reliance and empowerment of the sponsored student and his/her family with the skills needed for gainful employment;
2. Develop qualified human resources and build the capacity and leadership of talented refugees in order to contribute to the process of reintegration in the home country upon repatriation;
3. Contribute to the refugee community pending a durable solution or repatriation (many graduates work in

- refugee camps, particularly as teachers and community workers);
4. Facilitate integration, temporary or permanent, and contribute skills to the host country, if repatriation is not or not yet possible;
  5. Provide a role model for other refugee students, particularly for girls to advance their education and demonstrate benefits of education (UNHCR, 2006 and 2007).

Also, in order to select degree programmes by the refugees, DAFI highlighted some criteria among which are:

1. The DAFI Programme in principle sponsors the first degree at a university level. Full medicine course of study as well as post-graduate studies are supported on an exceptional basis.
2. Priority should be given to studies relevant to the job market, with a high probability of gainful employment
3. Informal vocational and skills-training courses are excluded, with the exception of para-professional training provided at polytechnic institutions and higher technical colleges.

4. The granting of new scholarships should be limited to courses of four years in duration.

In the area of implementation, the DAFI programmes may be directly implemented by UNHCR offices, provided that the organisation has sufficient staff that can actualise. However, the implementation of the DAFI Programme is often supported by an NGO partner, working under the direction and supervision of UNHCR. Since the JDPC is a major partner of UNHCR's education programme in Nigeria, it is saddled with the responsibility of implementing DAFI programme in the country. The main reason why UNHCR decided to approach JDPC in implementing DAFI was because of her track record in the management of refugee education (most especially primary and secondary education) in Oru-Ijebu camp. The activities of JDPC in the management of DAFI programme in Oru-Ijebu camp included a uniform and equitable means for the dissemination of information on DAFI scholarships in refugee community, receipt of applications, the screening of applications, and monitoring of the performance of the operational partner (UNHCR, 2006 and 2007). In the area of application for DAFI

scholarship programme, the call for applications was issued through the UNHCR Branch Office Lagos and coordinated by the JDPC officials in Oru-Ijebu camp, where potential refugee candidates could be reached. The call for applications contained the number of scholarships available for male and female students as well as eligibility requirements. However, application and forms were distributed for free. With regards to the collection of applications, qualified applicants were usually told to obtain a letter of admission, or provisional admission letter from their proposed higher institutions of study. Also, the JDPC officials assisted the UNHCR to check and verify the school certificates of the applicants. After that, the forms were sent to the UNHCR office in Lagos where the screening of the applicants was carried out.

The screening was being carried out by a multi-functional selection team, constituted by the UNHCR, Lagos Branch. The terms of reference of the selection team as provided by the UNHCR, Lagos included:

- a) confirmation of the refugee status of the applicant by UNHCR Protection Unit,
- b) assessment the socio-economic status of the applicant's family,

- c) persons with special needs,
- d) camp-based/urban refugee,
- e) ethnic, religious and community balance.

The UNHCR equally provided certain minimum requirements for consideration. These include recognized refugee status, excellent academic performance, and socio-economic status. It also recommended that applicants should be 28 years for BA scholarship and 32 for MA scholarship, one scholarship per family, and priority for female candidates. Also, the applicant, when selecting tertiary institutions were required to focus on public universities that were accredited, possessing the proper resources and conditions for study. In other words, in selecting the universities of their choice, both cost and quality of the institution should be taken into consideration by the refugees. Private institutions should be considered in cases where public ones do not have slots or courses of study available for refugee students.

With respect to interview and final selection of qualified applicants, a committee known as Selection Committee was constituted by the UNHCR, Lagos. The Committee comprised:

- i) UNHCR (two staff members, at least one of whom is in the professional Community Services or Protection category)
- ii) the German Embassy (usually the Cultural Attaché),
- iii) a representative of the JDPC,
- iv) the Implementing Partner designated by UNHCR,
- v) German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) staff
- vi) a representative of the Federal Ministry of Education
- vii) two Representatives from Oru-Ijebu (UNHCR, 2006 and 2007).

After the successful conduct of interview with prospective applicants individually, the committee's final decision was submitted to the Director of UNHCR, Lagos Branch, who would then publicly have shared the outcome with other agencies and government parties engaged in educating refugees in Nigeria (like the Ogun State government and JDPC). The list of the new DAFI scholars was also shared with Headquarters (in Germany), with their bio-data, the newly assigned DAFI scholar registration code and all relevant information about the studies (such as course of study and institutions). According

to the report of Paul Tiao, of the 105 refugees who were selected after the interview, only five were able to secure admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria on the sponsorship of the UNHCR, through DAFI (Tiao, 1992:3). Through JDPC, DAFI programme was successful in Nigeria between 1992 and 2006. Evidences from the literature showed that following the return of Liberian refugees and well as the winding off of Oru Refugee camp by the UNHCR in 2007, DAFI programme could not be implemented further (UNHCR, 2006 and 2007). A statistical analysis of the total number of refugees that benefitted from DAFI scholarship programme in Oru-Ijebu Refugee Camp in Nigeria is presented in the below tables and bar chart.

**Table 3: Summary of Refugees that benefitted from DAFI Scholarship in Nigeria in 2006**

Country Operation:	Nigeria
Office:	UNHCR Nigeria UN House Plot No 617/618 Diplomatic Zone Central Area District P.M.B. 2851, Garki Abuja +234 9 461 8569
Partner:	Justice and Development Peace Commission
Total number of	15

students	
Total number of Graduates	6
Percentage of Female students	47%
Total fund allocated	\$25,718

Source: UNHCR, 2006 Annual Report on the DAFI Programme, prepared by the Technical Support Section Division of Operational Services UNHCR Geneva 29 June 2007, p.47

**Table 4: Breakdown of Refugees that benefitted from DAFI Scholarship in Nigeria in 2006**

Country of Origin	Number of Students	Refugees (caseloads above 5,000 since 1995)
Liberian	10	6,100
Sierra Leone	4	(under 5,000)
Sudan	1	(under 5,000)
Total	15	-

Source: UNHCR, 2006 Annual Report on the DAFI Programme prepared by the Technical Support Section Division of Operational Services UNHCR Geneva 29 June 2007, p.47

The above table shows number of refugees in Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp that benefitted from the DAFI Scholarship in 2006. Of fifteen refugees in the camp, Liberian refugees recorded the highest securing 10, followed by Sierra Leonean refugees with 4, while Sudanese refugee had only one.

**Table 5: Breakdown of Fields of Study of Refugees that benefitted from DAFI Scholarship in 2006 in Nigeria**

Field of Study	Male	Female	Total
Law	1	-	1
Social and Behavioural Science	2	4	6
Commercial and Business Administration	1	2	3
Mass Communication and Documentation	1	1	2
Medical Science and Health Related	1	-	1
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	2	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>

Source: UNHCR, 2006 Annual Report on the DAFI Programme prepared by the Technical Support Section Division of Operational Services UNHCR Geneva 29 June 2007, p.47

The table above shows the fields of study of refugees that benefitted from the DAFI Scholarship in 2006 as well as the sex of the beneficiaries.

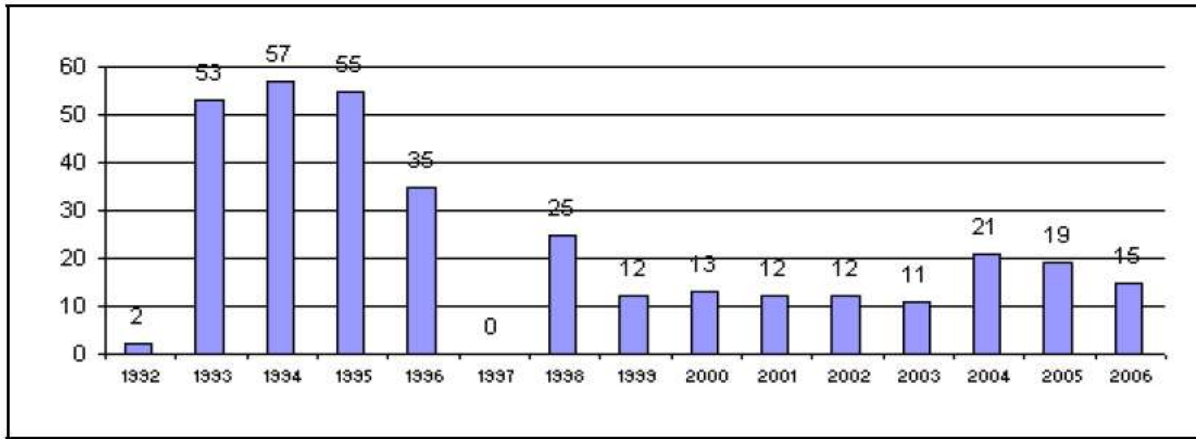
**Table 6: Details of Liberians that Benefitted from DAFI Scholarship**

S/N	NAME	Nationality	Institutions
1	Michael Baysah	Liberian	University of Benin
2	Paul Raucy	Liberian	University of Benin
3	Cherub	Liberian	Ogun State

	Anderson		University
4	John Tehtch	Liberian	University of Lagos
5	Famo Kromah	Liberian	University of Ibadan
6	Abu Sheriff	Liberian	University of Benin
7	Mohammed Sacker	Liberian	University of Ibadan
8	Fatmata Koromah	Liberian	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
9	Austin Sarlimah	Liberian	University of Benin
10	Yusuf Sarnah	Liberian	Ogun State University

**Source:** Oral interview with Mr. Tayo Ogunjobi on 14 March, 2016

The table above shows the names of Liberian refugees that benefitted from the DAFI scholarship and the universities where they were admitted in Nigeria. While majority of the beneficiaries were admitted into the University of Benin, only one each was admitted into the University of Lagos and Ahmadu Bello University.



**Chart 1: A Bar Chart Showing the total number of Refugees in Nigeria that Benefitted from DAFI Programme, 1992-2006 (Selected Years)**

The above bar chart shows the total number of refugees at Oru-Ijebu camp that benefitted from DAFI programme between 1992 and 2006. From the bar chart, majority of the refugees benefitted from the DAFI programme in 1994, with 57 refugees. This was followed by 55 refugees in 1995. The least was in 1992, with just 2 refugees.

Similarly, the JDPC exhibited tremendous interest in terms of skill acquisition programme for the refugees in Oru-Ijebu refugee camp. A number of skill acquisition programme was developed by JDPC in the camp. According to Mrs Ossai, JDPC established a vocational training centre in the camp in order to make Liberian refugees to be self-reliant. Although majority of the

participants were female, the male Liberian refugees equally participated in the programme. The skill acquisition programme covered a number of activities such as hairdressing, tailoring, carpentry, home making/decoration and so on. Experts

from different aspects of this programme were invited by JDPC to educate participants (Ogunjobi, 2016). The figure 2 below shows the building using for various skill acquisition programme.



Figure 2: Skill Acquisition Building at Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp

Figure 2 above is a skill acquisition building built for refugees at Oru-Ijebu Refugee camp, where different kinds of skills such as tailoring, hairdressing and so on were being carried out.

### **The African Refugee Foundation (AREF) and the Management of Liberian Refugees**

The African Refugee Foundation (AREF) is another major non-state actor that played a significant role in the management of

Liberian refugees in Oru-Ijebu Camp. AREF is an humanitarian, non-profit, and voluntary development organization set up in September 1993 by late Ambassador Olusegun Olusola, a former Nigerian Ambassador to Ethiopia. The organisation was saddled with the responsibilities of identifying the root causes of refugees and internal displacement, and managing the effects. Ambassador Olusegun decided to set up the organisation ostensibly to involve Africans and Nigerians specifically in the

management of refugees. While in Addis Ababa, he observed that many of the NGOs that were helping the African refugees were European and American based. Thus, having returned to Nigeria, he decided to set up the organization (Akin, 2002:61).

From the inception, AREF played a unique mediatory role in African refugee situation as well as developed various strategies to alleviate the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons all over the continent. With respect to Nigeria, AREF's major activities towards the management of refugees in Oru-Ijebu camp especially between 1993 and 2007 centred mainly on organising vocational training programmes for the refugees (Akin, 2002:61). The organisation also provided food items and relief materials such as clothing, utensils to the refugees (Lawrence, 2016). In 2007 when the UNHCR was planning to close the camp, the organization under the leadership of Ambassador Olusola organised programmes for the massive repatriation of Liberian refugees. They solicited for money from important Nigerian personalities, which would enable the refugees to become self-sufficient after returning to Liberia (Lawrence, 2016).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

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The foregoing has examined the significant role played by the non-state actors in the management of Liberian refugees in Nigeria between 1990 and 2007. It argued that the non-state actors were major stakeholders in the management of Liberian refugees at Oru-Ijebu refugee camp in Nigeria during this period. The non-state actors which comprised the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and African Refugee Foundation (AREF) worked in collaboration with the UNHCR and the government of Nigeria in the effective management of the refugees. It submitted that these non-state actors helped the UNHCR as well as the government of Nigeria in achieving their goals towards effective management of the Liberian refugees during this period.

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