

# **AN EVALUATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE TO THE IVORIAN CHILD REFUGEES IN GHANA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that with the exception of duly acknowledged references, this dissertation is the result of an original research conducted by me under the supervision of Professor Essuman-Johnson and that no part of it has been submitted anywhere else for any other purpose.



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## DEDICATION

*This dissertation is dedicated to my family, Mr. Bright Achina and my little girl, Golda Adom*

*Baah Acheamfour.*



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I thank the Most High God, the Father of all flesh for giving me sufficient strength and courage to step forward and conquer. My profound gratitude also goes to my supervisor, Professor Essuman-Johnson. Your encouragement has helped in putting this work together. God Bless you.

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**ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS**

ADRA	-	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ARC	-	Action for the Rights of the Child
AU	-	African Union
CCG	-	Christian Council of Ghana
GRB	-	Ghana Refugee Board
IRC	-	International Rescue Committee
MOH	-	Ministry of Health
NADMO	-	National Disaster Management Organisation
NCS	-	National Catholic Secretariat
NMP	-	National Mobilisation Programme
NSFP	-	National School Feeding Programme
OAU	-	Organisation of African Unity
PNDC	-	Provisional National Defence Council
UN	-	United Nations
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	-	World Food Programme
WHO	-	World Health Organisation

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## ABSTRACT

The term refugee connotes dejection and hopelessness especially for the vulnerable groups such as children, women and the physically challenged. The plights of refugees are often worsened by the fragile economies of host countries particularly in Africa, rise in numbers of refugees globally and the decline in donor support for humanitarian assistance. Nonetheless, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which is the main body of the UN responsible for humanitarian assistance has over the years not relented in their efforts. They continue to provide food and other relief items, accommodation, health services, counselling and other social services for refugees across the world. But reports from some refugees' camps across Africa have revealed that children live under some unpleasant circumstances. Children lack access to education and medicines, while others live in constant fear of rape and abuse by drunken and drug addicted parents and siblings. Some young girls go to the extent of selling their bodies for money because of lack of food. These unfortunate situations are in variance to provisions of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This study sought to find out whether the UNHCR has drawn lessons from its assistance to children in these camps to better the lives of children in subsequent camps. It evaluated how effectively the UNHCR is meeting the various needs of children in refugee camps and the case in point is the Ivorian refugee children in Ghana who came into the country in 2011 with particular reference to the Ivorian refugee children at the Ampain camp in the western region. The research discovered that UNHCR assistance to refugee children in Ghana is minimal compared to the level and quality of care and protection the children require. Findings also brought to the fore pertinent issues such as security at the camps, access to tertiary and vocational education for adolescent children, nutritional supplement for malnourished children and improvement in food and other relief supplies for children which need to be addressed by UNHCR and its partner agencies.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the research topic and gives a background to the study. The research problem, objectives, rationale and methodology employed for the study are also provided.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The issue of refugee or asylum seeking has been in existence since ancient times and every country across the world has been affected one way or another by refugee crisis. Nations who have been involved in violence or chaos have produced millions of refugees. Other countries that are untouched by conflicts provide material assistance and relief to the displaced. But the magnitude of the refugee crisis after the Second World War (1939-1945) in Europe drummed home the need to establish a subsidiary body to assist and find solutions to refugee problems.<sup>1</sup> After several deliberations in the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established and started operation from January 1951.<sup>2</sup> It is also referred to as the UN Refugee Agency and its core mandate is the protection of refugees. This mandate has over the years been expanded by various resolutions of the General Assembly and its Economic and Social Council.<sup>3</sup>

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol defined a refugee as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion, is outside his country of nationality and is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. (UN Convention relating

to the Status of Refugees 1951, Article 1(2)). This definition however did not adequately address the specific issues leading to refugee inflows in Africa. Political, ethnic and tribal conflicts that are peculiar to Africa do not only result in refugee inflows to neighbouring countries but also massive displacement. Hence the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union passed a regional supplementary convention in 1969. It broadened the definition of refugee to include: "Every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing order in either part of or the whole of his country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality" (OAU Convention on Refugees 1969, Art.1 [2]). The convention sets out rights to be enjoyed by refugees. They include: non-discrimination, freedom of religion, the right to public relief and assistance, right to education, and right to housing.

UNHCR is the main UN body responsible for refugees; but works closely with other UN agencies such as World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).<sup>4</sup> Many a time conflict, violence, abuse of human rights and threat to life has forced many people to flee their homes for safety elsewhere. Over the last two decades, the UNHCR has witnessed a series of refugee crisis unparalleled in the history of its operations. This has placed huge demands on UNHCR's resources and that of its partner agencies. As of January 2007, UNHCR was responsible for a total of 21,018,589 persons. Six years on, (2013) persons of concern to UNHCR has risen to 35,440,210.<sup>5</sup> Two years of unabated violence in the Syrian Arab Republic has resulted in the massive movement of over one million people to neighbouring Turkey,

Lebanon and Jordan. Up to 8,000 more arrive daily, 76% of who are women and children. Additionally, the Refugee Agency is strengthening its operations in Northern Mali to assist a total of 710,000 internally displaced people and refugees. The beginning of French airstrikes in January 2013 to maintain peace in a Malian conflict that started in 2012 has produced 2,744 refugees. Of these 1,411 are in Mauritania, 848 in Burkina Faso and 485 in Niger. In addition to these numbers and those displaced in the Malian crisis which occurred as a result of the overthrow of the President in 2012, there are 147,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, 55,221 in Mauritania, 52,875 in Niger, 38,776 in Burkina Faso, 1,500 in Algeria, 26 in Guinea and 20 in Togo. At the same time, almost 229,000 people are displaced inside Mali. Most of the refugees who are crossing to Mali are women and children with some old women. Globally there are over 35,000,000 people of concern to the UNHCR, including 10,404,820 refugees, 895,290 asylum seekers, 15,473,400 IDPs and 3,477,120 stateless persons.<sup>6</sup> The surges in refugee emergencies occurred in the context of a global economic crisis, overstressing the capacity of the organization to respond adequately to the needs of the large population under its mandate.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Over the past years, the UNHCR has overemphasized its financial challenges and has on a number of occasions appealed for increased donor support. Yet its operational budget continues to witness a downward trend.<sup>7</sup> For example, 2013 budget is only 37% of the budget it received in 2011. This budgetary shortfall has forced the UNHCR to cut back on its staff and programmes. The work of the agency is again constrained due to the fact that countries that once generously opened their doors to refugees have been tempted to shut those doors to prevent uncontrolled migration to safeguard its national security. Some donor governments, who support

large numbers of refugees over long period of time in less wealthy countries, are also struggling with the costs of their own domestic systems for receiving refugees and determining their claims.<sup>8</sup> Thus, their support is now minimal. Yet, regardless of whether the UNHCR has money or not, the problem of refugee keeps increasing and the Agency is expected to live up to its mandate. The protracted conflict in Sudan, Syria and post-election conflicts in parts of the world especially Africa accounts for mass movements of people out of their country to seek refuge elsewhere. The early months of 2013 saw thousands of people flee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Sudan, and Syria. Up to 40,000 persons have fled the Central African Republic.<sup>9</sup> The UNHCR as mandated by UN is required to continue its regular operations worldwide and also make provision to cover such emergencies and large-scale repatriation operations. The situation leaves one to wonder the quality of assistance the UNHCR gives to the over thirty-five point four million persons under its care.

The vast majority of refugees are in Africa and some Asian countries which are struggling to meet the needs of their own citizens.<sup>10</sup> One of such is Ghana. Ghana solicited the support of UNHCR in 1993 when it could not sufficiently provide for the needs of the ever-growing refugee population in the country. There are Liberian, Togolese, Sudanese, and Sierra Leoneans refugees who have lived in Ghana for over twenty years.<sup>11</sup> As is the case in other countries, the UNHCR representation in Ghana is constrained largely due to inadequate funds. The agency is also compelled to assume some roles reserved for government. The administrative operations and remuneration of personnel at the Ghana Refugee Board and the Buduburam and Krisan Camps which are the responsibilities of the government are borne by UNHCR. The agency also bears the cost of utilities and general upkeep of the camps from its meagre funds as well as providing

the host communities with social amenities to improve their livelihoods as a way of thanking them for hosting the refugees.<sup>12</sup> All these additional responsibilities coupled with the agency's dwindling funds are impacting on the basic services it offer to persons of concern such as food, health, education, shelter, water and sanitation. For instance, limited funding and high cost of putting up transitional shelters is hampering the agency's efforts to provide durable shelters for the refugees. Refugees still live in canvas tents and shelters made from plastic sheeting and bamboo frame. Training programmes geared towards making refugees self-supporting have also been slow due to inadequate funds. The post-election unrest in Cote d'Ivoire which began in November 2010 resulted in the movement of over eighteen thousand persons to Ghana which was literally seen as an additional work for the Agency.<sup>13</sup> Presently, there are about 18,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Ghana; over eight thousand of whom are Ivoirians. Seven thousand two hundred of them are living in Ampain, Fetentaa and Adjeikrom Refugee Camps in Ghana. Though it declined to make public its budgetary allocations, there were indications that the UNHCR representation in Ghana is challenged financially. The 2012 budget was sixty-eight per cent lower than that of 2011 and the 2013 budget was also thirty-six per cent lower than that of 2012. The 2014 budget is likely to go down by twenty-nine percent of 2013.<sup>14</sup> In the light of its limited resources and the daunting task of finding durable solutions for refugees in Ghana, this research seeks to evaluate the quality of assistance the UNHCR gives to the Ivorian refugees with particular reference to the child refugees in Ampain camp in the Western Region. The spotlight is on children because they often need specialized care and assistance which are likely to be ignored. It is also due to the fact that there is a gap in literature on the problems of refugee children from Ivory Coast in Ghana hence the need to fill that gap with this research work.

## Research Issues

Children who become refugees face numerous challenges which are often overlooked. One such problem is their education which is often considered a luxury for people who are fleeing violence, abuse and deprivation from their home countries. Continuing school children and beginners as well as their parents or guardians mainly have their eyes on safety, food and shelter. As a result education is often marginalized and children loiter about in refugee camps with no hope of education to help them get back on their feet and build a better future. At Tangogara Refugee Camp in Zimbabwe, a number of children have dropped out of school because of differences in curriculum and academic difficulties owing to the trauma suffered during the conflict situation forfeiting any opportunities for educational and personal advancement. Parents also refuse their children access to education because they believe their children must engage in income generating activities to support the families.<sup>15</sup>

Another challenge for these children is that in spite of the fact that the refugee camp is supposed to serve as a safe haven, refugee children often face brutalities. For example some refugees from the Osire Refugee camp in Namibia who have been notoriously rowdy and mischievous and perhaps were involved in the fighting and killing of people back home, have been known to maltreat refugee children. Children often take a long time to recover psychologically from brutalities or they may never recover. Some become mentally unstable, and in worse cases the children develop violent tendencies and will need systematic counselling. Also in the Osire Camp, some men drink and abuse or beat their wives and children. Children are also afraid to walk around the camp because of drunken adults. Many teenagers especially boys drink and take drugs and this make them fight with teachers, boys and girls at the camp. Some adolescent also



steal in order to get money for their gambling activities. Girls engage in prostitution (give sex for money) because they need food and clothes. As a result of this there is a high rate of teenage pregnancies at the camp. Many children also live without parents and thus do not have any guidance or people to advise them. Rape perpetrated by the refugees themselves is a common happening at the Marratane Refugee camp in Mozambique and children are the likely victims. Children admitted to the camps may have also suffered sexual abuse as a result of the conflict and human rights violations in their home country and need systematic counselling.

It is also worth noting that some children who are admitted at the Marratane Refugee camp are malnourished. The general monthly food ration to the entire household does not help much. Many a time, such children need special diet and medical attention. Additionally, Children who may have lost parents and near relatives during wars and unaccompanied children at the camps are forced to live with foster parents unknown to the child. Not only is that traumatizing but they also face maltreatment from such foster families. Drawing conclusions from previous studies at various refugee camps, this study hinges on the assumption that the UNHCR care and assistance to Ivorian refugee children are minimal and do not adequately respond to the specific needs of children. Recalling that the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child in its preamble states that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment as well as in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

The questions that arise for this research are as follows:

- What is the UNHCR protection and assistance policy for refugee children?
- What specific care and support are given to children as per the needs of the children in Ghana?

- To what extent are these programmes successful, what challenges have been encountered?
- What lessons can be learnt from the studies?

### **1.3 Scope of Study**

This research is not the first on refugees in Ghana. Other studies have been conducted on refugees in Ghana but the point of divergence lies in the fact that this research focuses primarily on UNHCR'S care and support for Ivorian child refugees in Ghana using the Ampain camp as case study. Since the UNHCR operates through the host nation, this work is particularly concerned because of the language barrier, and also because they are new in the country. The research will also examine the extent and relevance of assistance at the refugee camps.

### **1.4 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are;

- a) To assess UNHCR assistance to Ivorian child refugees in Ghana per the rights of the children.
- b) Evaluate the extent to which UNHCR has instituted and translated its policy on the care and protection of refugee children into concrete actions.
- c) Recommend possible assistance that will enhance the wellbeing of child refugees.

### **1.5 Rationale**

Although many studies have been conducted in the area of refugee assistance, it is important to take a careful look at assistance given to child refugees considering that they are most

vulnerable. The evaluation of the UNHCR assistance whether poor or average, is not to discourage the organization but to create awareness and solicit support for improved care and support delivery to child refugees so that humanitarian agencies will see the urgent need to respond to the calls of the UNHCR. On the other hand, if it is impressive, the idea is not to make the body complacent but to be focused in their humanitarian efforts at improving the lives of the shattered and giving hope to the hopeless. The study will also add to existing knowledge on refugees in Ghana in academic literature and serve as a reference for future research.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

Goran Melander traces the refugee situation across the world after the Second World War and asserts that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of refugees worldwide.<sup>16</sup> However, this magnitude did not correspond with the international community's respond, offering neither asylum nor financial assistance. Then there was a shift in the 1980s which saw the international community providing assistance through the UNHCR. The author probed the magnitude of such international assistance to refugees and the role of UNHCR in distributing them. Melander stressed that assistance to refugees were unequally distributed by the UNHCR.

To Melander there were reasons to suspect that, in the mid-1979, greater part of available resources was channelled to refugees in Europe and in Southern Asia while the vast majority of refugees in other parts of the world especially in Africa received little assistance. Even on the same continent, Melander showed the disparity in assistance. For example, Melander found out that the refugees' situations in Djibouti and Somalia have the same causes of flight, the refugee population has equal origin and in both countries the refugees are mostly rural people. Yet,

UNHCR assistance in Djibouti amounted to US\$1,062 dollars per capita, while that in Somalia was US\$161 dollars though the number of refugees in Somalia was almost twice as that in Djibouti. What the research failed to indicate was whether the specific needs of various segments of the refugee population in a country influenced the level of assistance to that country and this work seeks to find out if the segment of the refugee population that are children in an African country-Ghana, receives special attention.

Shelly Pitterman looked at the operations of the UNHCR two decades after it began operations to protect refugees from World War II.<sup>17</sup> According to Pitterman, the UNHCR with an expanded mandate now has one of the largest budgets within the United Nations organization. The Refugee Agency was initially created for, governed and funded by Europeans to resettle and integrate European refugees from the Second World War. But twenty years after it began operations, the Agency is faced with the challenge of providing protection and aid to other numerous refugees who have fled to and from countries especially in Africa recovering from colonial rule. Pitterman explains that the threefold mandate of the UNHCR which is voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement has over the years been elusive due to the 'load' it has now being made to carry.

The article also revealed that the UNHCR's goal of protection is to ensure the physical safety of refugees in their countries of asylum, yet the vast majority of refugees continue to suffer human rights abuses and threats of expulsion and forced repatriation. What was clear also was that the UNHCR's core policy goal of local integration is now giving way to emergency relief in the form of basic food, shelter and domestic needs with most aid now being channelled towards

multipurpose and supplementary assistance programmes. This trend even though is not in contrast with UNHCR's mandate, is gradually making impossible efforts at finding durable solutions such as local integration of refugees. Kent Randolph agreed with Melander that international aid forms a greater portion of UNHCR's assistance to refugees.<sup>18</sup> For him, politics is the key determinant of who gets what, when and where in a refugee crisis. He cited the assistance to refugees by Italian Relief Operations as been politically motivated. Politics as he defines it has to do primarily with the allocation of values and resources.

According to Kent, nations treat the processes in donor responses to refugee emergencies like any other general emergencies. An example he cited was in 1982 and early 1993 when Angola and Mozambique were faced with serious food shortages. Because both countries were regarded as Communist, officials of the United States Aid Office of Refugee Emergencies, Disaster and Food Aid in Africa did not offer any assistance even though the plight of the refugees became worsened. This was an attempt to ensure that nations that are not aligned to the US political ideology of democracy did not receive assistance of any kind. What is of interest to me is whether all international aid to refugees through the UNHCR is politically motivated.

In her book on Emergency Assistance to Refugees, Harrel-Bond examined emergency assistance programmes to refugees at the Yei River District of Uganda.<sup>19</sup> She discovered that the aim of the assistance programmes were to help refugees become economically independent. The programmes laid emphasis on equity, meaning every household was entitled to the same amount of food ration and other material aid. However, she discovered that by treating all refugees equal, the assistance programmes had unintended consequences of aggravating economic differences

with the most vulnerable groups growing ever more dependent and impoverished. These vulnerable groups identified were orphans, widows, physically or socially handicapped, single parents and children.

Additionally, Harrel-Bond brought to the fore two types of international aid agencies; the UNHCR and international voluntary agencies or nongovernmental organizations. According to her, there are other outsiders that have an impact on refugee assistance programmes. Harrel-Bond agreed with Kent that international power politics influences the extent and manner in which an emergency is handled. An example she cited was when an Advisor to the then US President Reagan, Ambassador Douglas visited Yei River District of Uganda and saw wheelbarrows being used to transport sick people to the clinic in the camps. His visit culminated into the supply of an ambulance to the district by UNHCR.

Louise Horlborn also gives a broad overview of refugee problem across the world, the devastating impact of fighting and the refusal of over thousands of refugees to return to their home country. He made a case for the elimination of the root causes of the problem of refugees.<sup>20</sup> For her relying on conventions and national regulations will not adequately address the problem, what is important is to track the causes underpinning refugee inflows and adopt measures to minimize them. These root causes include colonial and racist regimes, political, ethnic and minority oppression and exploitative relationships. Essuman-Johnson agreed with Horlborn on the root causes of refugees across the world. In his journal article, he mentioned that involuntary population accounted for more than half of all the international migration since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and still is. The thrust of the article was the Liberian refugees who

have refused repatriation from Ghana to their home country.<sup>21</sup> The refugees demanded resettlement to a third country in Europe or North America rather than local integration. Essuman-Johnson explained that the US Resettlement Programme was the reason for their refusal to return home or integrate locally. Inadequate funding on the part of UNHCR was a major obstacle for repatriation operations.

In another journal article, Essuman-Johnson gave reasons for the minimal assistance provided to Liberian refugees upon their arrival in the country.<sup>22</sup> It included politics, novel nature of situation in Ghana and the financial crisis the UNHCR was going through. The politics stemmed from Ghana's involvement in ECOMOG (ECOWAS Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia) and the fact that the government was not willing to do anything that suggested that the refugees were in the country to stay for good. The UNHCR was constrained by inadequate funds. Their projects to aid refugees were financed through voluntary contributions mostly from governments.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

The Theory of International Regimes is relevant to my research work since the focus of the study will be on the operations of an international organization- UNHCR. The concept was introduced in 1975 by John Ruggie.<sup>23</sup> He defined international regimes as “a set of mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans, organizational energies and financial commitments which have been accepted by a group of states”. This theory gained prominence in research from the mid-1970s.

A leading proponent of international regime, Steven Krasner defined regimes as “set of implicit or explicit principles norms, rules and decision making procedures around which actors expectations converge in a given issue area of international relations.”<sup>24</sup> These issue areas include

money, energy, environment, refugee, telecommunication and health. Ernst Haas also defined regimes as “a mutually coherent set of procedures, rules and norms.”<sup>25</sup> In all definitions, certain concepts stand out. These are norms, principles and rules. According to Krasner principles represents rules and conducts that states ought to obey in their day-to-day interactions with other states. Rules are specific prescription and proscription for actions. Norms represent behaviour in terms of rights and obligations. There are also decision-making procedures which are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice.<sup>26</sup> Regimes may be formal or informal. Formal regimes are as a result of legislation by international organizations. Such regimes may possess governing councils and bureaucratic structures. On the other hand, informal regimes “may be based simply on a consensus of objectives and mutual interests among participants, resulting in ad hoc agreements. In summary, the theory of International Regimes propounded by Ruggie suggests an agreement by states on a set of mutual expectations and commitments governed by mutually agreed rules and norms to provide some degree of order in international relations. These agreements are developed by states as a response to a common challenge confronting members of the regime. Set up in response to the refugee crisis in the post Second World War by the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) falls into the category of a formal regime.”<sup>27</sup>

The UNHCR was established by a UN resolution to assist and find solutions to refugee problems in member states. The UNHCR Statute adopted by the General Assembly in December 1950 defines a refugee as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion, is outside his country of nationality and is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. This



category of people are provided with emergency and relief items, social services and psychological counselling as well as durable solutions such integration, voluntary repatriation and resettlement of refugees in a third country. As provided for in Articles 32 to 35 of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, contracting states are obliged to open their borders to refugee inflows.<sup>28</sup> They are required without any discrimination to provide refugees with every available opportunity, which would enable them to realize their economic potentials. As an International regime, the work of the UNCHR is financed by the founding body which is the UN and voluntary contributors. Its programmes, protection regimes and other policy guidelines are approved by an Executive Committee of seventy (70) member states that meets annually in Geneva aside other UN bodies that oversee the work of the agency.<sup>29</sup> When UNHCR was formed it operated primarily in Europe, where material assistance was largely made available by countries that had granted asylum to refugees. Over the years, the General Assembly has broadened the scope of UNHCR's work to include the protection of various groups of people who are not covered by the Refugee Convention and Protocol mainly due to rising number of refugee problems in developing countries. These people include returnees (former refugees), stateless persons and internally displaced persons. In more than six decades the agency has helped an estimated fifty million people to start their lives anew. The agency is however constrained and is unable to adequately provide assistance to the over ten million refugees across the globe as at January 2012. Countries that once generously opened their doors to refugees have been tempted to shut those doors for fear of abetting uncontrolled migration and jeopardizing national security. Some donor governments are struggling with the costs of their own domestic systems for receiving refugees and determining their claims, while also supporting large numbers of refugees over long period of time in less wealthy countries.

UNHCR is also facing budgetary shortfalls from UN and has been forced to cut back on staff and programmes.<sup>30</sup> The theory of international regime is relevant and appropriate to the study because it seeks to explore how Ghana and UNHCR have complied with the rules and norms of the regime that set up the UNHCR by assessing how refugee children are being assisted in Ghana.

## **1.8 Clarification of Concepts**

### **Refugee**

The 1951 UN Convention and its Protocol of 1967 define refugee as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion, is outside his country of nationality and is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. This definition does not include those who flee their countries owing to wars, revolutions, civil strife or generalized violence. The 1969 OAU Convention came out with a broader definition which took care of other refugee inflows, especially those in Africa. According to the OAU Convention, a refugee is “every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing order in either part of or the whole of his country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality”. For the purpose of this study, the term refugee shall be understood in the light of the definitions of the 1951 Convention and its Protocol and the 1969 Convention.

## **Refugee Children or Child Refugees**

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen” The term refugee children or child refugee are generally children between zero and eighteen years who fall in the category of refugees. For the purpose of this research work, refugee children mean children between six and eighteen years because the work was about getting the children to talk about their opinions so one can understand their actions and emotions.

## **1.9 Methodology**

Qualitative method of data collection was employed in this research. Qualitative research is all about exploring issues, understanding phenomena and answering question. Focus groups, in-depth interviews are among many approaches that are used, but qualitative research in its most basic form involves the analysis of any unstructured data, including open-ended survey responses.<sup>31</sup> Qualitative method of data collection was employed to help the researcher find out not just what the Ivorian child refugees and care givers think about the assistance given to the child refugees by UNHCR but why they think it. Hence one-on-one interviews were used.

## **Unit of Study**

The quota-sampling technique is used to evaluate the UNHCR’s assistance to the Ivorian child refugees in Ghana. Quota sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher selects units from sectors of the population. The critical requirement here is that there should be enough cases from each regiment of the population to make possible an estimation of the population stadium value.<sup>32</sup> Seventy Ivorian child refugees were selected at random at the

Ampain Camp for interview. For the purpose of this research work, child refugees refer to children between six and eighteen. This category of children can share their opinions about the assistance given them by UNHCR so one can understand their actions and emotions. The respondents were interviewed in the presence of parents or guardians of the children who served as guides and support to the children. One-on-one interviews enabled the researcher to get underneath the children's responses to find out what is driving their decisions. Again, this research work investigated the "why and how" of decision making by the children or parents, not just what, where and when. Hence, smaller but focused sample was selected rather than larger samples.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were developed and used as a guide to the interviewers. Three interviewers, who were refugees at the camp conducted the interviews at the interviewees' homes in French, but recorded the responses in English. A range of topics were covered including education, feeding and nutrition, access to healthcare and safety at the camp. Common themes were grouped together into key categories. Interviewers' insights from their own experiences as refugees provided useful perspective. Data from interviewers were later analyzed using content analysis. Officials from UNHCR, Partner Agencies working at the Ampain Camp and the Camp Managers were also interviewed. The one-on-one interview got the officials to expand on their answers so that the researcher can get more insights into their work and attitudes of the children. Office documents from the office of the UNHCR, Ghana were used to ascertain facts on the topic. Works of authors, journal articles, seminar reports and newspaper information were also examined.

### 1.10 Limitations of Study

This study has largely been constrained by the fact that not much work has been done on child refugees in Ghana. The poor record keeping at the Ampain Camp and bureaucratic nature of government institutions hindered efforts at getting information on the actual number of child refugees at the three Ivorian camps. For ethical reasons, the researcher has withheld the names and identity of refugee children who were interviewed.

### 1.11 Arrangements of Chapters

**Chapter one** is the Research Design. It introduces the research topic and gives a background to the study. The research problem, objectives, rationale and methodology employed for the study are also provided. **Chapter Two** examines the mandate of UNHCR and its programmes and policies with regards to the protection of children. It also highlights the origin of refugees in Ghana. **Chapter Three** discusses UNHCR assistance to Ivorian child refugees in Ghana visa-vis the rights of children provided for in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. **Chapter four** is the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations or suggestions for improvement in the future operations of the Agency in the care and assistance to refugee children

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>UNHCR, *A Mandate to Protect and Assist Refugees*, 1971, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations General Assembly Resolution 319 (A) of December 3, 1949.

<sup>3</sup>United Nations General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) of December 14, 1951.

<sup>4</sup>UNHCR (1971) *A Mandate to Protect and Assist Refugees*, 1971; pp. 100-103.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.unhcr.org> 03/07/2013

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>UNHCR, *Refugee Protection: A Guide to International Refugee Law*. (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2001) pp. 6-7.

<sup>9</sup><http://www.unrefugees.org> 19/06/2013

<sup>10</sup>Ibid

<sup>11</sup>Interview with Patience Folley, Public Information Officer, UNHCR Ghana 10/06/2013

<sup>12</sup>Interview with Lisa Cudjoe, Protection Officer, UNHCR Ghana 12/06/2013

<sup>13</sup>Interview with Patience Folley, Public Information Officer, UNHCR Ghana 10/06/2013

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Patience Folley, Public Information Officer, UNHCR 02/07/2013

<sup>15</sup>Cases of Children Living in Tangogara Camp in Zimbabwe, [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

<sup>16</sup>Melander, Goran "Refugees and International Cooperation," *International Migration Review Vol.15*. New York: Centre for Migration Studies; 1981, pp. 35-41.

<sup>17</sup>Pitterman, Shelly, "A Comparative Survey of Two Decades of International Assistance to Refugees in Africa" *Africa Today Vol.31, No1 Refugees and Integrated Rural Development in Africa*, Indiana University Press; 1984, pp. 25-54.

<sup>18</sup>Kent, Randolph C., *Emergency Aid: Politics and Priorities*, (London: Printer Publishers, 1987)

<sup>19</sup>Harrel-Bond, Barbara F. *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>20</sup>Horlborn Louise W., *International Refugee Organisations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Essuman-Johnson, A, "Going Back Home: The politics of the Repatriation of Liberian and Togolese Refugees in Ghana" in *LEJIA Vol.2, No.1*, May 2005, p.1.

<sup>22</sup>Essuman-Johnson. A, "The Liberian Refugee Problem and Ghana's Response To It" in *LEJIA Vol.2, No.1* March 1992, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup>Rugge, John G. *International Regimes, Transactions and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Post War Economic Order*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

<sup>24</sup>Krasner, Steven D. *International Organisation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

pp.1-5.

<sup>25</sup>Haas Ernst, *International Organisation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975)

<sup>26</sup>Krasner, Steven D. op. cit.

pp.1-5.

<sup>27</sup>United Nations General Assembly Resolution 319 (A) of December 3, 1949.

<sup>28</sup>Pitterman, Shelly, op. cit.

<sup>29</sup><http://www.ipu.org>.

<sup>30</sup>UNHCR, *Refugee Protection: A Guide to International Refugee Law*. (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2001) pp.6-7.

<sup>31</sup><http://www.gsrinternational.com>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTR TWO**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE MANDATE OF UNHCR AND THE ORIGIN OF UNHCR IN GHANA**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter examines the mandate of UNHCR and its programmes and policies with regards to the protection of children. It also highlights some causes of child refugees. Finally, it looks at the origin of refugees in Ghana.

#### **2.1 The Mandate of the UNHCR**

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is also known as the UN Refugee Agency. In recognition of the magnitude of people who had been displaced throughout Europe as a result of the Second World War, the United Nations General Assembly after several deliberations agreed by resolution 319 (iv) of December 1949 to establish a subsidiary body to oversee to the resettlement and reintegration of refugees across Europe. The body was called the UNHCR and its mandate was set out subsequently by Resolution 428 (v) of the UN General Assembly of 1950, to offer on a non-political and humanitarian basis, international protection to refugees and to solicit durable or permanent solutions for them. It carries out this mandate at the request of a government or the UN itself and assists refugees in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country.<sup>1</sup> But in just over two decades the focus of UNHCR shifted from Europe to the rest of the world especially due to decolonization in the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> There was sharp increase in the number of refugees and this posed a challenge to UNHCR as member states were unwilling to resettle the refugees.<sup>3</sup> As a result the

UN Refugee Agency became heavily involved with assistance programmes within refugee camps, often located in hostile environment.<sup>4</sup> UNHCR's mandate has been broadened to include the protection and provision of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) who fit into the legal definition of refugee under the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967 Protocol and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention who remain in their country of origin.<sup>5</sup> Total population of persons of concern to UNHCR in 2013 stands at 35,440,210.<sup>6</sup> In Palestine, UNHCR does not bear responsibility for all refugees in the West Bank, Gaza strip, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Some come under an older body known as United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The UNRWA has a wider mandate than the UNHCR which extends to descendants in perpetuity. It covers refugees from the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars.<sup>7</sup> However, other refugees who fall outside the scheme of UNRWA are catered for by UNHCR. The UNHCR operates in Africa, Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Middle East and North Africa. It works in the areas of advocacy, assistance, asylum and migration, capacity building, finding durable solutions, emergency response, protecting the environment, fundraising and protection.<sup>8</sup>

### **Advocacy**

The refugee agency influences and transforms policies and services on national, regional or global levels to better protect the people under its care.

### **Assistance**

UNHCR provides initial assistance in the form of clean water, sanitation, health care as well as shelter. It also gives material and other relief items such as blankets, sleeping mats and



household goods. It assists in refugee registration, advice on asylum applications, education and counselling, and packages for returnees and refugees who wish to locally integrate and income-generation projects and restoration of infrastructure for refugees and host communities.

### **Asylum and Migration**

The quest for employment and educational opportunities is causing massive movement across the world, While UNHCR recognizes that border controls are necessary to combat international crime, it works to ensure that government and policy makers adhere to practical protection guidelines regarding migration and asylum seeking so that such measures are not applied in a discriminatory and disproportionate manner and migrants and asylum seekers who are escaping danger in their countries are not sent back to countries where they fear danger.

### **Capacity building**

It builds the capacity of refugees through skills training programmes to make them self-reliant. The refugee agency also builds the capacity of government and decision-makers in order to enable them to propose and adopt best practices in dealing with refugees and asylum seekers

### **Durable solutions**

Among the mandate of UNHCR is to assist in finding lasting or permanent help for refugees and asylum seekers. Lasting solution involves helping those who desire to return home do so, integrate refugees in host countries or resettle them in one of the sixteen states which regularly accept refugees for permanent resettlement.

**Emergency preparedness and response**

The refugee agency moves in during sudden occurrences such as devastating earthquakes which displace many people and break out of conflicts which results in massive movement of population. The agency has a team of people with wide range of expertise ready for deployment in emergency situations. There is also an emergency stockpile of non-food items in Copenhagen and Dubai to supplement local supplies as well as a long standing agreement with freight forwarders and logistics to dispatch supplies during emergencies.

**Protecting the Environment**

Trees are usually cut to build shelters in emergencies. These practices have negative impact on the environment. UNHCR thus puts in place strategies to address environmental issues such degradation and helps to avoid conflict which arises over competition of natural resources between refugees and host communities.

**Fundraising**

The agency is principally funded through donors from government, private sector and individuals. It has a team made up of highly professional, knowledgeable and dedicated people to raise funds to support its annual budget.

**Protection**

The agency coordinates international actions to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of refugees. The main goal of the UNHCR is trying to guarantee a refugee's basic human rights and to minimize the threats of violence including sexual assault which many are subject to even in the

countries of asylum. The agency also devotes resources to try to avert disaster that will necessitate huge population movements from global trouble spots. One such approach is the establishment of an international monitoring unit to confront problems before it escalates into conflicts.

### **Funding for UNHCR**

The activities of the UNHCR are financed through the Emergency Fund, Special Trusts and Operations or General Programme of UN. UNHCR with its expanded mandate now has one of the largest budgets within the United Nations Organisation.<sup>9</sup>The UNHCR receives its monies almost entirely from voluntary contributions, with eighty-six per cent provided by governments and the European Union. Six per cent is from other inter-governmental organizations and pooled funding mechanisms while a further six per cent is from the private sector including foundations, corporations and individuals. Additionally, the agency receives a two per cent subsidy from the UN regular budget for administrative costs and accepts in-kind contributions such as medicines, tents, trucks and air transport.<sup>10</sup>The Statute of the UNHCR also states that the High Commissioner shall administer any funds, public or private, which he receives for assistance to refugees, and shall distribute them among the private and as appropriate public agencies which he deems best qualified to administer such assistance.<sup>11</sup>UNHCR began operations with an annual budget of US\$300,000 in 1950.<sup>12</sup> As it grew in size and mandate, its expenditure also soared. The refugee agency's annual budget rose to more than US\$1 billion in the early 90's and reached a record US\$4.3 billion in 2012, compared to US\$1.8 billion in 2008.<sup>13</sup> The top five donors in 2012 were United States (US\$793 million), Japan (US\$185 million), the European Commission (US\$164 million) Sweden (US\$118 million) and the Netherlands (US\$103 million).

The Executive Committee, made up of seventy member states, meets annually in Geneva to approve the policy guidelines of the agency including its budget.<sup>14</sup> For example, in October 2011, the Executive Committee approved an initial budget for 2013 amounting to US\$3.42, comprising US\$3.5 billion for programmed activities, US\$241 million for the Operational Reserve, US\$20 million for the 'New or Additional activities mandate-related (NAM) Reserve, and US\$12 million for the Junior Professional Officers Scheme. At its sixty-third session in October 2012, the Executive Committee approved a revised budget for 2013 amounting to US\$ 3.92 billion, comprising US\$3.61 billion for programmed activities, US\$283 million for the Operational Reserve, US\$20 million for the NAM Reserve and US\$12 million for the Junior Professional Officers Scheme. The increase of US\$462 million was to help address new and on-going needs in major emergencies that arose after the approval of the initial 2013 budget.<sup>15</sup> More specifically, it was in response to displacement crises in Sudan/South Sudan, Mali and the Syrian Arab Republic. New cases arising in the second half of 2012 and continuing into 2013, was to be catered for through the use of the operational reserve or supplementary appeals.<sup>16</sup> A new annual high of US\$5.3 billion had been reached by the end of June 2013, comprising almost US\$ 4 billion for the annual budget and US\$1.3 billion for supplementary appeals.<sup>17</sup> The annual budget is meant for annual programmes, ie continuing regular operations and supplementary programmes to cater for emergencies or large-scale repatriations. UNHCR has been appealing for more and more funds from donors in the public and private sector. Together with UNDP, they are appealing jointly for US\$262 million for the period 2012-2014 to provide durable solutions for refugees.<sup>18</sup> These programmes will depend on the availability of predictable resources for a minimum of three years. UNHCR is seeking for additional support for this initiative so that activities to promote durable solutions are not implemented at the expense of

humanitarian and emergency programmes. The agency's ten largest operations are located in three regions; i.e. Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa. In recent years, the UNHCR decided to cut its budget to Africa due to financial constraints. This was however not to be with the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire and other parts of the continent. For 2012, the UNHCR's budget for the sub region amounted to US\$168.8 million. This amount covered the provision of assistance to displaced people, capacity-building programmes for governments, particularly for protection activities and reintegration and local integration support.<sup>19</sup> Refugee programmes make up the largest component of the total budgetary requirement of the UNCHR accounting for seventy-eight per cent. There is an estimated 10,404,820 refugees in 2013 with 6,058,960 receiving assistance from UNHCR.<sup>20</sup> In more than six decades; the refugee agency has assisted an estimated fifty million people to restart their lives. As of June 2013, staff of seven thousand six hundred and eighty-five people is in more than one hundred and twenty-five countries assisting some thirty-five point four million people in a variety of locations ranging from capital cities to remote camps and border areas. Antonio Guterres is the 10<sup>th</sup> High Commissioner.<sup>21</sup>

## **2.2 Causes of Child Refugees**

In conflict situations, many children as young as six years are recruited as child soldiers. It is estimated that in the last two decades approximately 200,000 child soldiers were recruited in 35 countries.<sup>22</sup> The reasons had been that children are biddable and easily indoctrinated. When recruited, these children are taken through rigorous training and preparation which involves ill treatment. These children often become the target of abuse because they are doing adult job and if captured, they face severe punishments for their actions. Some children are also innocent

victims in the events of war. In the case of the Rwandan genocide, children and even unborn babies were cruelly killed in order that they would not grow up to become opposition and potential killers. There are also millions of children who suffer humiliation, hunger, fear and even death due to natural disasters and deliberate human interference in food supplies and health services. Examples are the drought and food shortages in Somalia, Ethiopia, epidemics and political injustices in Zimbabwe. As at the late 1990's, UNICEF estimated that two million children had been killed in war, four to five million had been made physically disabled, and ten million had been traumatized by violence, displacement and loss of family members.<sup>23</sup> These and many other instances across the globe have rendered children refugees in foreign countries sometimes under very hostile and harsh conditions.

### **2.3 Efforts by UNHCR Towards Protection of Refugee Children**

Given that children are a vulnerable group in society, the UNHCR, in delivering on its mandate has instituted numerous policies and programmes to ensure that refugee children receive the best of care and assistance in accordance with acceptable international provisions. One such is the *Guidelines on Refugee Children adopted in 1988*.<sup>24</sup> Based on seminal international standards adopted by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, assessment of the 1988 Guidelines and discussions with UNHCR field staffs, other UN agencies and non-governmental organization involved in the work of refugees, the 1988 policy guidelines was reviewed and a revised Policy on Refugees was adopted in 1993.<sup>25</sup> The Agency issued new guidelines in 1994 known as the *Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Refugee Children*.<sup>26</sup> The UN Refugee Agency again appointed a Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children in 1992.<sup>27</sup> As part of his assignment, he was to monitor the implementation of guidelines on refugee children adopted in

1988, which was updated and expanded in 1994. These guidelines are to guarantee that the special needs, capabilities and rights of children are perceived, understood and given due attention through systematic planning bearing in mind the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Among the achievements of the Senior Coordinator are the launch of the Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC) training project and periodic capacity training workshops for UNHCR field staffs.<sup>28</sup>

Again in 1994, the post of a Legal Advisor for Refugee Women and Children was created in the Department of International Protection of UNHCR<sup>29</sup>. This was to complement the work of the Senior Coordinator. The posts of four Regional Children's Advisors were created in Nairobi, Abidjan, Damascus and Ankara in 1997 to further assist the Agency in meeting its mandate on refugee children<sup>30</sup>. Their role is to initiate and coordinate needs assessment programmes for field staffs at the regional levels. These specialists' positions were made possible with funds initially from governments of Norway and the United States.

In 1996, the United Nations undertook a study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (the Machel Study). The findings arising from this research work became an important tool for UNHCR in their protection of children. An internal assessment at the request of the High Commissioner based on the report helped to streamline the concerns of children and adolescent in the Agency's programmes and policy guidelines. In implementing the recommendations of the Machel study, the UNHCR has to address five priority areas in its assistance to Refugee children. These areas are separated children, or unaccompanied, education, sexual exploitation, adolescents, prevention and monitoring of military recruitment of children.<sup>31</sup>

In recent years, the UNHCR operates three broad policies in determining the best interest of the child. Firstly, UNHCR has instituted the child welfare structures such as temporary care arrangement for unaccompanied children and separated asylum-seeking children. Secondly, UNHCR makes decisions to identify durable solutions including voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement for unaccompanied and separated children. Lastly, they make decisions which may involve separation of the child from parents against the will of the child or parents because of abuse or neglect.<sup>32</sup> To ensure that these operational and legal standards to be observed by UNHCR in the care of refugee children are not just beautiful inscription on paper, it is important to assess the extent to which the UNHCR policy on child protection have been translated into concrete actions on the field.

## **2.4 Origins of Refugees in Ghana**

The Republic of Ghana is located in West Africa with an area of 239,460km<sup>2</sup>. It lies on the Gulf of Guinea, a few degrees north of the equator. It is bordered on the West by Cote d'Ivoire, on the East by Togo, on the North by Burkina Faso and in the South by the Atlantic Ocean. The climate is tropical and agriculture is the backbone of the economy. It contributes about 47% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for 56% of the country's work force.<sup>33</sup> Ghana until 1989 had a negligible experience in hosting refugees. Before the UNHCR established its office in Ghana in 1976, refugees in the country were mainly Southern African refugee students who had come for further studies and to seek employment.<sup>34</sup> There were also asylum seekers who were political activists seeking political education and military training.<sup>35</sup> These refugees received full sponsorship for their stay and education in Ghana because of President Kwame Nkrumah's Africanisation Policy and the favourable economic conditions that prevailed in the country at the



time. In the 1970s, many more Southern refugees and a few from Namibia came for education and employment. During this time, the UNHCR Field office was established to provide counselling. The UNDP made available logistics and office space. The UNHCR Field office secured educational placement for refugees and assisted them to be self-supporting through counselling. As at June 1985, the UNHCR was assisting one hundred and three officially recognized refugees in Ghana.<sup>36</sup>

The number of refugees increased in 1990 when the war in Liberia escalated. The planes and vessels sent by the Ghana government to evacuate nationals caught up in the war were joined by some Liberians and other nationals to Ghana. Some later came to Ghana through the Elubo, Aflao and Paga borders. With the influx of these refugees, Ghana sought assistance of UNHCR when it had difficulties in their care and maintenance. The situation worsened between 1993 and 1997 with the coming in of Togolese refugees. As a result of the violence in Sierra Leone in 1997, thousands of Sierra Leone nationals joined the Ghana ship that was sent to rescue Ghanaians caught up in the fight. Others also came in the country by themselves. The UNHCR provided material and physical protection to the refugees. For effective care and protection, the UNHCR upgraded its office in January 1994 from Charge de Mission to a full – fledged branch office with its head as the High Commissioner for Refugees' Representative.<sup>37</sup>

## **2.5 The Ghana Refugee Board (GRB)**

Ghana Refugee Board, GRB was established by an Act of Parliament, PNDC Law 305 on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1993 to manage and guide all issues relating to refugees in Ghana.<sup>38</sup> However, the first board was established in 1995. It is a twelve-member body with one representative chosen by the

UNHCR to sit as an observer. The GRB is an inter-ministerial body headed by a Chairman who is appointed by the President and consists of members drawn from different sector ministries. It is directly under the Ministry of the Interior. GRB is charged with the responsibility of overseeing government policy on refugee issues including refugee status determination, assisting them to seek employment and seeing to their welfare. The Board appoints a Settlement or Camp Manager who represents it in all its activities there and report directly to it. Government organizations responsible for disaster relief, i.e. the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) and the National Mobilisation Programme (NMP) have administrative responsibility for the camp. The board was dissolved in 2001 but was reconstituted in November 2002 and has since been operating.

## **2.6 The Work of UNHCR in Ghana**

In Ghana, the stated objectives of the UNHCR are:

- a. To mediate between and oversee the operations of nongovernmental organizations working within the camps.
- b. To distribute essential resources efficiently and effectively such as food, educational materials and medical equipment.
- c. To provide tangible political and security support to raise the standard and status of camps.
- d. To advise and authorize the repatriation of refugees when viable.<sup>39</sup>

The work of the UNHCR is based on understanding between the two parties- government and UNHCR. To facilitate its work, the government offered to exempt the Agency and its implementing partners from all forms of taxes and levies in their dealings with refugees and to

assist in any way needed. Ghana has also among other legislation protecting refugees in Ghana waived its Aliens Act that prohibits aliens from engaging in petty business for refugees.<sup>40</sup> UNHCR is non-operational and it implements its assistance programme through a number of government and nongovernmental organizations. These organizations are the Ministry of Health (MOH), National Mobilisation Programme (NMP), Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), National Catholic Secretariat (NCS), International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). The main implementing partner is government which operates through NMP at Buduburam and Krisan camps. As at January 2012, the Buduburam camp hosted over 11,000 Liberian refugees.<sup>41</sup> The Buduburam camp has developed into a semi-urban area with many refugees engaged in low-income economic activities. Between January and December 2012, 4,710 were assisted to return home, exceeding the initial figure of 3,900. 3,800 refugees have chosen to integrate locally and 1,400 have opted for Exemption. There are over 1700 refugees who have not decided on any of the three durable solutions and have failed to contact UNHCR or government.<sup>42</sup> The Krisan Camp in the Ellembele district of the Western region hosts about 1,100 refugees and asylum seekers of various nationalities. They are engaged in informal employment such as fishing, day labouring and charcoal production. The UNHCR partners with government, other UN agencies and NGOs to offer basic humanitarian assistance such as food, healthcare, education, security and psycho-social counselling to the refugees. The refugees are also engaged in skills training programmes such as hair dressing, dress making etc offered by UNHCR and implementing partners. They also receive start-up kits from the agency to begin their trade.<sup>43</sup>

## **2.7 Problems Facing Refugees in Ghana**

Briefly, the challenges of many refugees in Ghanaian camps include inadequate food supply, clothing and shelter. Others experience psychological stress. Children of school going age find difficulties in furthering their education and seeking employment. Generally, protection at the camps is porous as criminals and dangerous animals easily invade the camps. The problem of insufficient funds, coupled with shortage of operational staff and growing fatigue in communities hosting refugees is undermining the efforts of the UNHCR to adequately assist the growing population of refugees under its care.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>6</sup><http://www.unhcr.org>
- <sup>7</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/united\\_Nations\\_High\\_Commissioner\\_for\\_Refugees](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/united_Nations_High_Commissioner_for_Refugees)
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup>Pitterman, Shelly, op. cit.
- <sup>10</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/united\\_Nations\\_High\\_Commissioner\\_for\\_Refugees](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/united_Nations_High_Commissioner_for_Refugees)
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- <sup>14</sup>Ibid.
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- <sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 1.
- <sup>24</sup>Efforts by UNHCR in the care and protection of children, <http://www.unhcr.org>, accessed on 5th June, 2012.
- <sup>25</sup>Meeting the Rights and Protection needs of Refugee Children: An Independent Evaluation of the Impact of UNHCR's Activities, May 2002. [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org), accessed on 5th June, 2012.
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- <sup>29</sup>Ibid.,p. 5.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid.,p. 19.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid.,p. 6.
- <sup>32</sup>UNHCR Guidelines on the Formal Determination of the Best Interest of the Child. <http://www.unhcr.org>, accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2012.
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- <sup>38</sup>PNDC Law 305D, Part II Establishment of a Ghana Refugee Board.
- <sup>39</sup>Interview with Patience Folley, Public Information Officer, UNHCR Ghana 10/06/2013
- <sup>40</sup>Interview with Felix OfosuArmah NADMO 06/06/2013
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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **UNHCR ASSISTANCE TO IVORIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN IN GHANA**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter gives an overview of the general conditions of children at the camps. It also discusses UNHCR assistance to Ivorian child refugees in Ghana vis-à-vis the rights of children provided for in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

#### **3.1 International Instruments on the Rights and Protection of Children**

During conflict situations, children do not usually understand the reasons why they ought to flee their homes, but they are scared and so they run. They take with them only a few belongings which they can carry. There is often no time to gather the most valuable possessions. Thus the children run with only the hopes and dreams. International protection of children becomes necessary when they can no longer enjoy or access the protection and care of their home governments. International protection of children refugees is recognized as actions to defend and promote the rights of these vulnerable groups of persons outside their home country. It includes all actions or programmes undertaken to safeguard the rights of refugee children. These rights involve ensuring that the special needs of refugee children especially victims of violence and those separated from their families are identified and attended to. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights confers on children special care and assistance. This is because children are physically and mentally immature and these rights will help them to be fully prepared to live an individual or independent life as well as assume fully every responsibility that will be imposed on them by the community.<sup>1</sup>

There are other several international instruments geared towards the protection and wellbeing of the child. These include the Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, the Geneva Convention on Children (1951) and its 1967 Protocol, the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation (1993) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989). However, the latter has gained universal acceptance because of its generality and appeal. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen” and insists that in dealing with this group of persons their best interest should be paramount. Refugee and asylum-seeking children are a group often forgotten within the population of children.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, the recognition of the needs of such children have highlighted in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 22 specifically addresses the plights of refugee and asylum seeking children:

“States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee...shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his/her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance to trace the parents or other members of the family... in order to obtain information necessary for reunification...” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ART [22])

Other highlights of children’s rights which is of relevance to my research work include Article 19 which requires that any person who has the care of the child must institute appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures that are geared towards protecting the child from all forms of physical or mental abuse or violence such as rape, maltreatment and exploitation<sup>3</sup>. In the event of armed conflict, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, the Convention in Article 39, enjoins institutions to provide rehabilitative provision for victims of the circumstances to receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social integration.

For children who are physically or mentally disabled, Article 23 requires State Parties and other parties that have the burden of child care to promote self-reliance and active participation in the community by providing education, training and healthcare services for these challenged children in order for them to enjoy full and decent life. The health of children is another priority area. Article 24 enjoins states to ensure the provision of health care and medical assistance to all children. Measures should also be put in place to combat diseases and malnutrition in order to ensure the attainment of highest standards of health care and facilities for the treatment of illnesses.

### **3.2 Ivorian Refugees in Ghana**

Ghana is one of the many developing countries striving hard to provide social and economic infrastructure to meet the needs of its ever growing population. With the worsening of the Ivorian political crisis in March 2011, many nationals of that country escaped to find refuge in Ghana. The government of Ghana which is primarily responsible for the refugees, had to mobilize scarce resources to meet the challenge. Lands originally earmarked for economic ventures were diverted for settlements. Negotiating for the release of stool lands for settlements also came with huge cost for government<sup>4</sup>. After the government of Ghana provided land and personnel to man the various camps that will host the refugees, the UNHCR then stepped in to provide relief assistance and protection to the refugees which it does through its national and international implementing agencies.

When the conflict started in Cote d'Ivoire in November 2010, Ivorian nationals who had families and friends in Ghana came in smaller groups to live with them. However, there was an influx of



people trooping in to the country when the situation escalated in March 2011. Many came in through the main border town at Elubo. Personnel from Ghana Immigration Service, Customs, Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS), Ghana Police Service, UNHCR and National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) screened and registered the refugees that came through the Elubo border to be admitted to newly created camps across the country.<sup>5</sup> Three main camps were created for the Ivorian refugees in March 2011. There is the largest one which is the Ampain camp in the Western region. It hosts over 4,000 refugees. While the majority of Ivorian refugees entered the country through the western corridor, a sizeable population from the North-East of Ivory Coast sought asylum in the BrongAhafo region. In response, the Fetentaa Camp was established in the Berekum municipality and currently hosts about 1,509 refugees. Egyeikrom Camp was established in the Central region and hosts about 1,696 refugees.<sup>6</sup>

There were over eighteen thousand Ivorian refugees in Ghana. The actual numbers present in the country were not available as some didnot register upon arrival, whilst others lived in various areas in Ghana other than the camps and reception centres under the watchful eyes of Ghana Refugee Board and UNHCR.<sup>7</sup> This made verifiable distortions frequent and accounted for the rounding up of figures. Errors in estimation are also inevitable given the difficult circumstances in gathering data. Currently, there are over eight thousand of them in Ghana, about seventy-two in refugee camps. UNHCR provides material assistance and counselling services to these refuges.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2.1 General Conditions at the Ampain Camp

Two visits to the Ampain camp in the Western region in December 2011 and July 2012 gave a clear insight into the operations of UNHCR and its partnering agencies. The Ampain camp was established on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2011 to respond to the influx of Ivorian refugees in the country. It is the largest of all the three Ivorian camps in the country with a land size of thirty-two (32) acres. Six thousand four hundred and eighty (6,480) refugees were admitted at the camp after they have been duly registered and certified by the Ghana Refugee Board. After a voluntary exercise in 2012, the number has been reduced to four thousand two hundred and sixty-three (4,263).<sup>9</sup> The general breakdown provided by the camp authorities is as follows.

Table 1: Breakdown of Camp Population

Item	Male	Female	Total
Refugees from 0 yrs	1,957	2,306	4,263

Of the four thousand two hundred and sixty-three (4,263) people at the camp, one thousand nine hundred and fifty-seven (1,957) are males and two thousand three hundred and six (2,306) are females. Camp authorities could not give further indications of the population because they are yet to undertake a re-registration of members at the camp. With regards to formal employment for refugees, some non-governmental organizations working at the camp such as the National Catholic Secretariat have employed some of the refugees as Nutrition Assistants among others. Some youths are also involved in social works, various sporting activities, peer counselling and other activities as a means of channelling their energies into productive endeavours. While some refugees work in Accra, Elubo and surrounding towns and villages, others engage in trading at the camp. This involves the sale of food items, hawking of provisions especially at the local

market. Other income generating activities at the camp include a video theatre and a number of eating and drinking joints.

UNHCR and its implementing agencies provide social services. These services are measures taken to improve the ability of refugees to prevent, reduce and resolve their immediate problems to achieve adequate and lasting physical, social, psychological and economic wellbeing. These include counselling and skills training. With regards to accommodation, refugees live in tents. These tents are built closely together. The tents are crowded together with at most five persons in one tent. Refugees complain of congestion at the camp. There are no buildings at the camp except for the offices of the UNHCR.

### **3.3 UNHCR Assistance to Refugee Children in Ghana**

After the refugees have settled at the various camps, the UNHCR through the National Catholic Secretariat is responsible for their general welfare. The Christian Council of Ghana is responsible for education.

#### **3.3.1 Care for Malnourished Children**

When refugee children arrived at the camp, they were scared, tired and weakened by hunger and by their journey. They easily catch diseases. Causes of malnutrition in children occur as a result of default in feeding due to sickness, conflict situations and travelling long distances. The UNHCR through the National Catholic Secretariat has established Nutritional Centres at the camps that take care of the nutritional needs of malnourish children at the camps.<sup>10</sup> On arrival at the camp, the centre screens refugees to identify the malnourish people among them. The centre

gives preference to children between zero (0) to fifty-nine (59) months, pregnant women and lactating mothers who are generally at risk of becoming malnourish. These groups are referred to as the vulnerable groups because they stand a higher risk of becoming malnourish in times of crisis. For the children between zero and fifty-nine months, they are categorized into three groups; severely malnourish, moderately malnourish and at risk of becoming malnourished considering the nutritional status of the child. Those found to be severely malnourished with complications are referred to hospitals such as St. Martin de Pores at Eikwein the western region for treatment. When the children gain appetite they are sent back to the camp to feed on the general ration for the families. Those who are found to be moderate and those at risk of becoming malnourish are put on Supplementary Feeding Programme at the camps. The supplementary food is a protein-rich porridge called cerri-soya. Five sachets of porridge are given to the mother of the malnourish child after counselling every week to feed the child in their tents. As a way of monitoring, parents go for the supplementary food every week at the Nutrition Centre with the child to enable the Nutrition Assistants to check the child's weight. Nutrition Assistants stationed at the camps also visit malnourish children in their tents. Among their task is to find out if the environment and way of feeding by the mother are contributory factors to the child's condition. One of the numerous observations is that some mothers force children to eat by scolding them and this do not encourage children to eat. The Nutrition Assistants report back to the centre and their report serve as basis in counselling the mothers of the malnourish children. If the child gains fifty per cent of the admission weight, the child is discharged from the supplementary food programme to feed on the normal family ration. There are a number of Nutrition Assistants who monitor children who have been discharged to prevent a relapse. Children relapse for various reasons. Some mothers ignore counselling given by the Nutrition

Centre not to give only supplementary feed to their children, while others become addicted to the supplementary food and refuse to eat the family food after they are discharged.

### **3.3.2 Challenges**

There is no Rehabilitation Centre to house or admit the malnourished children and supervise their feeding habit. This makes supervision ineffective and sometimes prolongs the recovery of the children<sup>8</sup>. Not all children between zero and fifty-nine months who have been identified as malnourished benefit from the supplementary food programme due to inadequate supply. Children beyond fifty-nine months who are malnourish are simply counselled and made to feed from the family ration. Other identifiable groups of malnourished people such as people living with HIV/AIDS, diabetes, Hepatitis B, Epilepsy and Tuberculosis compete with children for the supplementary food programme. As at June 2013, pregnant women and lactating mothers who were identified as malnourish were counselled, and advised to depend on the family ration. This situation creates a cycle of malnourish children at the camp as the pregnant women gave birth to malnourished children and lactating mothers transfer their condition to their children. The tables below are some breakdowns of the responses of the seventy children interviewed put into various categories.

Table 2 Breakdown of ages of interviewees

AGE	NUMBER INTERVIEWED	PERCENTAGE (%)
6-10	36	51.4
11-15	20	28.6
16-18	14	20.0
Total	70	100

Table 3 Breakdown of sexes of interviewees

SEX	NUMBER INTERVIEWED	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	27	38.6
Female	43	61.4
Total	70	100

Out of the seventy children interviewed at random, twenty-seven (27) were males representing 38.6% while females were forty-three representing 61.4%. Their ages were categorised into three; six to ten years were thirty-six representing 51.4%, eleven to fifteen years were twenty representing 28.6% while sixteen to eighteen were 14 representing 20.0%. Authorities at the camp could not provide the actual number of children below eighteen years. A way out was to

add the number of children in school and children who have not yet attained school going age. This came up to one thousand seven hundred and two (1,702) children. This number does not accurately reflect the picture since one or two children in the secondary school level are above eighteen. There is also no indication of children who attend community schools. This shortfall in record keeping is an indication that no specific programmes are organized for children per the definition given by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many of the care and protection programmes aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of refugee children have become beautiful inscriptions on paper.

Table 4 Family history of interviewees

CATEGORY	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Parents	59	84.2
Grandparents/relatives	9	12.9
Foster parents	2	2.9
Total	70	100

Fifty-nine children representing 84.25% came to Ghana with their parents and are living with them at the camp. Four children arrived at the camp with relatives while five children came with parents but accommodation situation at the camp has compelled them to live with grandparents or other relatives at the camp, all together making nine refugee children staying with grandparents or relatives representing 12.9%. Two children representing 2.9 % who arrived at

the camp unaccompanied were living with foster parents. Some children are abused by these foster parents.

### **3.3.3 Care for Unaccompanied Children**

Unaccompanied children below eighteen years are given to foster parents.<sup>11</sup> To ensure that these children receive proper care, the field officers request for volunteers who on humanitarian grounds will provide a home for the children. The backgrounds of volunteers are investigated to know the ethnicity, cultural background, the family size and physical features of family members regarding their health. When satisfied, NCS gives the child to the foster parents. There are mechanisms in place to monitor the welfare of children who are under the care of foster parents to ensure their safety.<sup>12</sup> Children do not have much input in choosing the parents they live with.<sup>13</sup> But where there are reasons to believe or reports of maltreatment of foster children, UNHCR takes the children from the foster parents and give them to another. International Committee for Red Cross makes efforts to reunite children with their parents. One child has been reunited with parents in Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.3.4 Food and Relief Items for Children**

Food is provided by World Food Programme, and is distributed monthly depending on the size of the household.<sup>15</sup> Each person receives 12.5 kilos of rice, 0.5 litres of oil, 0.05 kilos of salt, 0.05 kilos of beans and 0.05 kilos of corn-soya blend. Children feed from the family ration. Nutrition Department of NCS monitors the feeding of children from zero to fifteen. But emphasis is placed on children from zero to five years because this period is the developmental stage of children and care is needed to ensure that they develop well.



Table 5 Feeding pattern of interviewees

NUMBER OF TIMES PER DAY	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Once	14	20
Twice	23	32.9
Thrice	30	42.9
Others	3	4.2
Total	70	100

Of the seventy children who were interviewed, fourteen children eat once a day representing 20%, twenty-three children at twice a day which also represent 32.9%, thirty children eat three square meal a day representing 42.9% and three children eat more than thrice a day representing 4.2%. Obviously they do not have enough to eat. What is worrying is that some of these children are in their formative and development stages. Those who eat three-square meals a day explained that apart from the meals they eat from their parents' pot, they also eat from other relatives at the camp. Children sometimes go without food because the family ration from UNHCR is sold to buy other things as refugees do not receive any form of monetary stipend.

### 3.3.4 Challenges to Feeding

Monthly food ration to families is inadequate and family members including children do not get enough to eat. The food ration which is distributed to households does not have the needed nutrients. It is kilogrammes of rice and litres of oil. Many families sell part of their ration to get

money to buy fish or meat. This is because refugees do not receive any assistance in terms of money. There is also no mechanism to compel families to feed the child three square meal per day.

### 3.3.5 Security at the Camp

The National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) is the direct representative of government at the camp. NADMO among other things provide security for the camps. The Ghana Police Service is also stationed at the camp to provide surveillance and to maintain law and order at the refugee camps. The Police Service is the government agency primarily responsible for providing security at the camp. Personnel from the National Fire Service are on hand to manage and avert possible fire outbreaks. The camps are not fenced and residents around the camp go in and out of the camp freely and this compromises security at the camp. Others also trade at the camps. The camp management and the UNHCR meet on regular basis to deliberate on issues affecting the welfare of residents at the camp.

Table 6 Safety concerns of interviewees

CATEGORY	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
No	54	77.1
Yes	16	22.9
Total	70	100

Sixteen children representing 22.9% are assured of safety at the camp while fifty-four representing 77.1% do not feel safe at the camp. Children were not too happy about safety measures at the camp as snakes and other predators invade the camp. For many of the children, collecting firewood in the bushes around the camp is a very difficult and risky work basically

because it is an unfamiliar terrain and for many it is a new experience to collect firewood for food. Children could be seen loitering about at the camp dirty with dust all over their bodies, obviously from playing in the dust. To the Camp Managers, the challenge is that there are no playing kits available for the children to play with. The alternative is to play in the sand with their bare hands and this is a contributory factor to the many child illnesses at the camp.

### 3.5 Health Care for Children

The camp runs a primary health care system for the refugees. Health personnel at the clinic are supposed to run the facility on a 24-hour basis to cater for sick people<sup>16</sup>. In the event of severe illnesses, patients at Ampain camp are referred to St Martin de Pores Hospital at Eikwe and Effiankwanta General Hospital at Takoradi. UNHCR pays for the facilities and medications while the National Catholic Secretariat is directly in charge of managing the clinic. The clinic is manned by qualified health personnel made up of a medical assistant, midwife, pharmacists, laboratory technician and auxiliary workers. UNHCR has a public health officer, who is a medical doctor and he has oversight responsibility for the clinic. In the event where drugs are not readily available at the clinics, prescriptions are given to parents to buy the drugs. NCS later reimburse the parents.

Table 7 Health concerns of interviewees

CATEGORY	INTERVIEWEES	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	24	34.3
No	46	65.7
Total	70	100

Twenty representing 34.3 % agreed there was availability of healthcare while forty-six representing 65.7 % said there was limited access to and non-availability of quality healthcare.

### 3.5.1 Challenges to health care

There are inadequate health personnel, so the clinic which is supposed to run a 24-hour basis breaks at five in the evening and resumes at seven in the morning. The bureaucracy in the purchase of drugs compels parents to buy the drugs. Facilities at the clinic are overstretched because the clinic serves the health needs of refugees and Ghanaians living within its catchment area. Due to the numbers, there is congestion at the clinic and refugees wait long hours to access healthcare. The delay at the clinic has compelled many refugees to seek alternative healthcare<sup>17</sup>. Again, provision of expired drugs at the clinics and this has resulted in the preference for herbs and other traditional medicines.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.5.2 Education at the camp

Table 8 Educational levels of interviewees

LEVEL	NUMBER INTERVIEWED	PERCENTAGE (%)
Primary	36	51.4
Secondary	33	47.2
Tertiary	None	-

Drop out	1	1.4
Total	70	100

Of the seventy children interviewed at random, Thirty-six representing 51.4 were in primary school, thirty-three representing 47.2 % were in secondary school, none was at the tertiary level and one representing 1.4% had dropped out after Junior High School to pursue a vocation when she returns to Cote d'Ivoire

Table 9 Educational levels of children at the camp

Level	Male	Female	Total
Kindergarten-Primary	418	419	837
Secondary	138	100	236
Chn under 5 yrs (not in school)	337	292	629

As of June 2013, children from Kindergarten to primary six at Ampain Refugee Camp were eight hundred and thirty-seven while two hundred and thirty-six were in Senior High School.<sup>19</sup> There are lots more outside the school who are being encouraged to go to school. Children below five years do not attend school, a situation the refugees claim is their practice. A child begins Primary school at age six. As opposed to the system in Ghana where the Junior High School is a part of the first cycle education, the Ivorian system has the Junior High School being a part of the second cycle education. Because of the language barrier and curricula differentiations, the UNHCR in partnership with Christian Council of Ghana has established a school at the camp that runs the French or Ivorian curriculum (which is general for all Francophone countries) so

that children can continue where they left off at the time of the crisis. The school accommodates thirty-five children per class, though some classes have less than thirty five. Children in the Kindergarten and primary come from 7.30 in the morning till 1 O'clock in the afternoon. Senior High School students take over the twenty four classrooms from 2 O'clock till 6 O'clock in the evening.

The system is such that to graduate from primary to the secondary school, there is external examination a pupil ought to write and pass. For security reasons, it was decided that candidates write their examinations in Togo. Christian Council of Ghana's attempt to register the primary and secondary schools candidates en bloc proved futile because the Togolese Educational Authority's requirement for the refugees to provide their birth certificates before registration could not be met as the refugees fled their countries without them. So parents of the refugee candidates through their own ingenuity got their children registered. Registration fees at both levels are paid by parents. Togolese educational authorities arranged with a school in Accra known as Complexe Scolaire de Accra which undertakes the French curriculum to provide examination materials and space for the refugee candidates at the primary level to take the external examination. The UNHCR bares the expenses that would be incurred including transportation and feeding. Forty-two (42) pupils sat for the examination in the 2012/2013 academic year. Students in the Second cycle write their external examination in Lome, Togo.

Togolese educational authorities in Lome provide classroom space, examination materials and accommodation for the candidates. Sixteen (16) students wrote the examinations July for the 2012/2013 academic year. The UNHCR representations in Togo and Ghana jointly bare the

expenses that will be incurred and also ensure their return. At all the various levels, pupils or students who fail their examinations are made to repeat the final class. Tertiary education is not available at the camp. Cost of tertiary education is borne by parents of the students. The German government gives scholarships to five Ivorian refugee students to pursue tertiary education in Ghana. The scholarship scheme is competitive and students from all three camps buy and fill a form to apply for the scheme. Education at all levels at the camp is free. UNICEF sponsors secondary education at the camp. Except for the Headmasters at the two levels who are professionals, teachers at the camp are not; they are refugees who have volunteered to assist in teaching. Smoking is a general habit among the male refugees at the camp and some teachers leave the classroom to smoke and return smelling all over, a practice which is seen as disincentive for learning. There are thirty-one (31) teachers at the kindergarten and primary levels with twenty-six (26) at the secondary level. Teachers at the pre-school and primary levels receive allowance of one hundred and fifty (150) Ghana Cedis per month from UNHCR. UNICEF has signed a two-year contract with teachers pay them a stipend of one hundred (100) Ghana Cedis per month. This contract however expires in September 2013 and teachers in the secondary school will have to look for a source of livelihood in addition to their voluntary teaching. It also implies that after September 2013 when UNICEF withdraws its sponsorship, secondary education at the camp will have to be halted or parents will be made to pay fees to keep it running. UNHCR in partnership with the Christian Council of Ghana provide students with uniforms and other educational materials. They also organize training programmes for teachers. For children who refuse to go to school and integrate with peers there are psycho-social activities to ease the trauma. Due to the effectiveness of the counselling system, those who

hitherto were traumatized are now mingling with peers and are also back to school. A few parents have enrolled their children in schools at the communities.

One challenge is the graduating system. The agency does not have the facilities to organize the examination at the camp and it is a huge cost to the agency to transport them to neighbouring Togo. Another challenge is materials used in constructing the school building. The scorching sun is a disincentive for teaching and learning as the plastic sheets used for the roofing of the classrooms get heated up. The classrooms also leak badly and teachers and students are always at the mercy of the weather during the rainy season. Again, many children at the kindergarten and lower primary who go home to eat during break period fail to return to school. Sometimes, there is no food in the house when they go home to eat during the break period and will have to help in the preparation of the meal. There have also been cases where foster parents prevent their foster children from going to school in order to assist in petty trading. In such situation, parents are counselled to give equal opportunities to all children with regards to obtaining education. There is lack of opportunities to pursue tertiary education that will lead to a recognized certificate since scholarship is limited just five students as of now. One school dropout explained that she is waiting to learn a trade when she goes back to her home country because there is no opportunity at the camp. Children especially girls are tasked with the responsibility to assist in catering for the home, such as engaging in petty trading and often do not have time to do their homework after school.

### **3.5.3 Abuse of Children at the Camp**

There have been few instances of abuse such as rape and defilement at the camps. Many of such cases are not reported out of sympathy for fellow Ivorian. Those that are reported go through the



legal system. But because many of the cases get to the notice of camp personnel late, evidence of the rape cannot be established by medical process and the case cannot be prosecuted. At Ampain camp, a refugee who raped a five year old girl in 2011 is serving a seven-year jail sentence.<sup>20</sup> There are ad hoc health and counselling arrangements for victims to ease the trauma and prevent diseases or infection. Victims go through screening and medication and security-wise the children are monitored to ensure their safety.

#### **3.5.4 Training for Staff in Child Protection**

Staffs of UNHCR have undergone a minimum level of training on child right protection issues. The UNHCR's policy on Refugee children have been made available to field staff and other officials of partner Agencies that deal directly with the children. Officials who flout these guidelines face sanctions.<sup>21</sup> One such policy guideline is to avoid corporal punishment. Neither parents nor field officers can abuse the child in the name of punishing the child. There have been cases where children have been forcefully taken from parents and given to foster parents in cases of parental abuse. Periodically, there are training for staff to update their knowledge in the dynamics of child care and protection. Teachers are trained to give social activities to children so that children can learn through playing. The UNHCR has also develop a mechanism to effectively understand other agencies' capabilities, working methods and areas of specification in order to communicate and disseminate successfully its policies and objectives to these agencies. The Refugee Agency has also been able to foster effective coordination of its implementing agencies in order to efficiently cover activities in relation to programmes on the rights and protection needs of children and to prevent duplication of roles.

### **3.6 Assessing the Needs of Children**

There are various sectors that work to ensure that the various needs of children are identified and addressed. Some non-governmental organizations also deal with specific needs of children. Right to life for example, deal with child protection, child growth and child health care. Others are into providing food, clothes and catering for teenage mothers. There are plans to organize skills training for the teenage mothers to be self-supporting. Other agencies are also into social activities. The agencies report to UNHCR and Camp Officers who meet occasionally to direct activities to be undertaken at all times.

#### **3.6.1 Challenges**

These agencies are however constrained financially. Though they are able to identify the specific needs of children such as physical, psychological, emotional, education and socio-economic needs of children, they do not have the institutional capacity to adequately attend to these needs. They rely on support from philanthropists and organizations which are usually not forth coming.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, preamble

<sup>2</sup>Boutrous-Ghali, Boutrous, *An Agenda for Peace*, (New York:UN, 1992), p46

<sup>3</sup>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, preamble

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Mr. Felix OfosuArmah, Official of NADMO and Deputy Manager, Ampain camp 20-12-12

<sup>5</sup>Interview with Mr. Kelly Forson, Camp Manager, Ampain Refugee Camp, 18-07-12

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Miss Patience Folley, Public Information Officer, UNHCR, 10/06/2013

<sup>7</sup>Interview with Mr. Kelly Forson, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Miss Patience Folley, Public Information Officer, UNHCR, 10/06/2013

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Mr. Felix OfosuArmah, Official of NADMO and Deputy Manager, Ampain camp 20-12-12

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Mr. Raymond Danbasia, Nutrition Officer, NCS 18-07-12

<sup>11</sup>Interview with Mr. Kelly Forson, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Mr. Felix OfosuArmah, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Interview with Mr. Kelly Forson, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>Interview with Child Refugee, Ampain Camp, 18-07-12

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Interview with Mr. Philip Kumahia, Education Coordinator, Christian Council of Ghana 06/07/2013

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Mr. Felix OfosuArmah, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>Interview with Mr. Kelly Forson, op. cit.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This fourth and concluding chapter assesses the research findings and makes recommendations or suggestions for improvement in the future operations of the Agency in the care and assistance to refugee children.

#### **4.1 Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this research has been to evaluate UNHCR assistance to Ivorian child refugees in Ghana. The research found that pupils and students were worried about the quality of teaching they are getting since many of the teachers are untrained. The volunteer teachers' lack of understanding of the subjects they teach does not help for effective teaching and learning. Following from this, the quality of education especially at the secondary level does not help students to make connections between schooling and their livelihood. It also revealed that limited access to tertiary, vocational and technical education is another shortfall in the work of the UNHCR with regards to adolescent refugees at the Ampain camp. Children after Senior High School do not have access to tertiary institutions. Tertiary education is self-financing and it is prohibitively expensive for the refugees. Lack of access to post-secondary education discourages higher education resulting in the dropping out of school after secondary education.

Another major issue emerging from the research is that lack of financial resources and inconsistencies in the remuneration of teachers at the secondary level can hinder the retention of teachers and general progress of refugee education at the secondary level at the camp. Again it

came to light that funds are inadequate to cater for refugees needing specialized healthcare. For instance, children above two years, lactating mothers and pregnant women who need nutritional supplement do not receive such support at the camp because of inadequate funds. Adolescent do not have enough education and sensitization on reproductive health. Generally, there is limited access to quality healthcare.

With regards to feeding, it is very difficult for refugees to obtain enough food for themselves and their families. Refugee children do not always eat what they need but what is available. Their daily meals do not always contain enough vitamins and nutrients needed for good health and normal growth. The wellbeing of refugees or otherwise is dependent on the resources of the host country.<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, the main UN Refugee Agency is constrained financially. Other benevolent organizations and individuals need to come on board to assist in the protection and care of refugees.

## **4.2 Conclusions**

The state of being a refugee is rather traumatic regardless of age. But for many reasons, this situation is particularly a difficult one for children. Almost half of the over the 35.4 million people under the care of UNHCR are children.<sup>2</sup> They are made up of refugees, asylum seekers, stateless as well as returnee and internally displaced children. The UNHCR, over the years have been responsible for providing food, water, shelter, healthcare and education for these children. The Agency also works to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing. However, the critical question of concern to this author is whether the UN Refugee Agency is effectively meeting the needs of refugee children. Often, children are the earliest and most frequent victims of violence,

disease, maltreatment and abuse which come with population displacement and refugee outflows. Refugee children face far greater dangers to their safety and wellbeing than the average child as the sudden disruption of families and community structures in the event of conflict or civil unrest affect the physical and psychological wellbeing of this group of children.

Children are also forced to take on adult responsibilities in refugee situations.<sup>3</sup> Adolescent girls maybe compelled to take up the roles of a mother in caring for younger siblings when the mother assumes the role of a father in the event where the father is unavailable at the refugee camp. As a result of this, the girl's developmental needs are often overlooked because of the load of task, lack of opportunities to play or attend school. Furthermore, the normal developments of refugee are undermined in across cultural situations. Among considerations for UNHCR to meet the physical and social needs of refugee children will be to provide support to their families and communities in refugee camps as well as identify and address their personal needs.

This study began with an overview of the refugee crisis across the world and the mandate of UNHCR to quickly and appropriately respond to such crisis. Some issues that have been examined included the reasons for child refugees and rights and protection of children as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also evaluated the UNHCR assistance to the Ivorian child refugees at the Ampain camp in the western region which is the largest of the three Ivorian camps in Ghana. The research findings indicated that UNHCR assistance is above average, but there are critical areas of child care and protection such as providing nutritional food for children, education at secondary and tertiary and healthcare which requires urgent attention.

Many times the suffering of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment of children falls on the blind side of international humanitarian organizations such as the UNHCR.<sup>4</sup> Children's physical, cognitive and emotional maturity is different from those of adult and must be acknowledged and addressed as such in the event of conflict situation and living at refugee camps. A more child-focused and child-informed work is necessary to ensure that the child's voice and experiences are not only heard but their needs are also addressed.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

In view of the fact that opportunities for personal development is the right of every child, the UNHCR need to broaden their educational budget and programming approaches to include non-formal opportunities for Refugee children particularly adolescent. Children who desire to learn one trade or the other often fall out of the schemes of the UNHCR. Again, owing to the fact the higher education is important for refugee children to rebuild their lives; a more significant contribution should be made towards children who wish to further their education to the tertiary institution or vocational and technical schools. Perhaps the Refugee education Trust Fund in the offing can incorporate issues of secondary and tertiary education. The Refugee Education Trust is an organization dedicated to raising funds for post- primary refugee education.<sup>5</sup> The Trust is also primarily to support teachers with incentives and children with learning materials. There is also the need for donor governments and private sectors to expand scholarship schemes to give opportunities to more brilliant students to acquire tertiary education.

Many children in their formative and developmental stages are asking for more recreational activities and tools for sporting and other playing kits. It is a known fact that children learn faster

through playing. It is therefore essential for care takers or guardians to regulate or deliberately influence the kind of playful activities children engage in. Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child prescribes that provision be made for recreation and play, which are essential for physical and mental development and which will help alleviate stress and trauma.

Children go to school sometimes on empty stomach. This situation is a disincentive for teaching and learning as children hardly concentrate because they are hungry. Many children who go home to eat during the break period do not return to school when they don't get food to eat. To this end, it is suggested to government and the UNHCR to collaborate and extend the School Feeding Programme currently running in the country to the refugee camps. This to a large extent will encourage enrolment and retention in school.

Due to the numerous security concerns at the camp, coupled with the inability of security personnel and UNHCR to ensure round the clock security, this author suggests the establishment of a Neighbourhood Watch Team. This group which will comprise camp volunteers will patrol the camp especially at night. The set-up of this watchdog team at the Liberian Refugee camp at Buduburam in 2003 is said to have improved considerably security situation at the camp. Since the safety and protection of children are considered primary in every undertaking according to the UN Convention of the Right of the Child, it is suggested that the camps be fenced to prevent wild animals and other intruders from invading the camps. Needless to mention, children are the obvious victims of these intruders. To allow children to live in destitution because they are refugees is unacceptable and inhuman.



**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Elsie Dinah Yaokumah, Associate Community Services Officer, UNHCR. 15-08-2012

<sup>2</sup>UNHCR Assistance to Child Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org> homepage 04-07-12

<sup>3</sup>Meeting the Rights and Protection needs of Refugee Children: An Independent Evaluation of the Impact of UNHCR's Activities, May 2002. [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

<sup>4</sup>Boutrous-Ghali, Boutrous, An Agenda for Peace, (New York: UN 1992) p.46

<sup>5</sup>Child Refugees in Africa, <http://www.childrenspaceprize.org>

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