

ISSN: 088855-5117

OGUAA JOURNAL OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES

VOLUME 8 NO.2, DECEMBER, 2017

LOCAL INTEGRATION OF LIBERIAN REFUGEES IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

In sub-Saharan Africa, protracted refugee situations have become common within the last three decades. Although voluntary repatriation is mostly recommended as the more lasting solution to refugee problems, some refugees think otherwise. This paper explores the views of Liberian refugees on local integration in Ghana. Using an in-depth interview guide, a total of 25 Liberian refugees were interviewed through the snowball sampling procedure at the Buduburam refugee camp. Guided by both the theory of national identity and an adapted framework on domains of local integration, the results show that the refugees are prepared for local integration. Most of them are already engaged in informal sector businesses as their sources of livelihood; almost all of them have established some social networks which facilitate interactions between them and the indigenes; and moreover they have been granted residence and work permits as well as registered for the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) as part of the integration package. It can be concluded that the Liberian refugees who opted for local integration are positively disposed for local integration in Ghana. There is the need for government to adopt the most appropriate local approach to facilitate the full intergration of the Liberian refugees into the country.

Key words

Local integration, domains of integration, refugees, Buduburam camp, Ghana

Introduction

Over the last three decades, Ghana has been hosting refugees mostly from some West African countries and other parts of Africa, notably Sudan, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Congo Brazzaville, Chad and Somalia (Author, 2013). For instance, in 1990, Liberians fleeing civil unrest and persecution from the civil war in their country sought refuge in Ghana. By 2004, Ghana was hosting 48,034 refugees living primarily in three main camps: Krisan Camp

in the Nzema East District of the Western Region near the Ghana-La Cote d'Ivoire border; Klikor in the Ketu South District of the Volta Region near Ghana's eastern border town of Aflao; and Buduburam in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region (UNHCR, 2004; Agblorti, 2011). It has been

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observed that about 12,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, Nigeria and La Cote d'Ivoire were hosted in the Buduburam Refugee Camp as at 2011, over 70 per cent of whom were Liberian refugees who were the first to be hosted there (Author, 2013).

Various studies have been conducted in the camp since its establishment in 1990. For instance, in her paper on the preparedness of Liberian refugees for self-reliance as the UNHCR withdraws its material support conducted in the Buduburam Refugee Camp, Shelly Dick observed that although the UNHCR had withdrawn all humanitarian assistance to refugees in the Buduburam camp, the Liberian Refugees in particular were quite self-reliant although not all refugees had equal economic opportunities (Dick, 2002). Social networks and individual capabilities were found to be some of the favourable factors that made some refugees self-reliant. In a study on refugee-host relationships in the context of livelihood opportunities within the Buduburam camp in 2008, it was observed that refugees' inability to speak the dominant Ghanaian language (Twi) hampered both their livelihood opportunities and social networks with Ghanaians (Porter, Hamsphire, Kyei, Adjaloo, Rapoo & Kilpatrick, 2008).

Also, Agblorti's (2011) work on host community's perspectives on refugee integration in Ghana revealed that access to land and potable water has created conflict between refugees and the camp administration on one hand and the host population and refugees on the other. According to the author, this development poses some challenges to local integration of refugees. In addition, Author

(2013) in his work on Refugees' reflections on their stay in the Buduburam Camp in Ghana opines that given the resources the Ghanaian government, the UNHCR and NGOs had invested in the Buduburam Refugee camp and the fact that the refugees have contributed directly or indirectly to infrastructural and socio-economic development of the Buduburam community, local integration of refugees is feasible in the Buduburam area (Author, 2013). He however, observed that the government of Ghana and other implementing partners are silent on local integration of refugees into the country, probably due to the absence of a legal framework in Ghana on local integration of refugees which is a key requirement for any successful local integration process. Furthermore, Agblorti (2011) observed that local integration remained the only viable solution to the Liberian refugees in the Buduburam camp since the refugees refused to be repatriated and there is also limited opportunity for resettlement in a third country (Agblorti, 2011).

Fielden (2008) examined how local integration has been implemented in some selected developing (first country of asylum) and developed countries (a third resettlement country) and concludes that it is relatively common for resettled refugees to obtain citizenship in the latter than the former, implying that local integration in developed countries is really a permanent or durable solution to protracted refugee situations. In most cases, the literature on local integration of refugees has focused on diverse domains or indicators or policy recommendations for integration which often includes legal, economic, socio-cultural, emotional and environmental domains (Threadgold and Court,

2005; Ager and Strang, 2004a; Strang and Ager, 2010; Byrne, 2013;) without considering the perspectives of the refugees themselves. This narrow approach to local integration has necessitated calls from Strang and Ager (2010) and others for more research that approaches the topic from refugees' own perspective. That is, local integration should be treated as a two-way process involving all the key actors.

In Ghana, government has proposed an integration package to integrate Liberian refugees who opted for local integration with the support of both local and international partners but while these proposals may be well-intentioned, the views of the refugees themselves are not known. The main objective of the paper therefore is to explore the views of the Liberian refugees who opted for local integration in Ghana. The paper is divided into seven main sections namely, introduction, contextual issues, conceptual and theoretical perspectives, study area and data and methods. The other sections focus on results and discussion and conclusion.

Contextual issues

The Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) was established under the Ghana Refugee Law 1992 (PNDCL, 305D) and is charged with the management of activities relating to refugees in Ghana. It is under the control of the Ministry of Interior. In Ghana, until more recently, there was no legal framework for implementing the durable solutions for refugees (Agblorti, 2011). For instance, according to Agblorti 'where this framework is lacking, not only do refugees have inadequate access to social and environmental resources but

more importantly, such access, if any, lacks legitimacy' (Agblorti, 2011:6). In 2012, the Government of Ghana endorsed a concept paper paving the way for the establishment of a National Policy for local integration of Liberian refugees who opted for local integration in the country. This was after the international community invoked the cessation clause, which revoked refugee status for all Liberian refugees globally. According to the Ghana Refugee Board, about 4000 refugees applied to be locally integrated in Ghana, about a 1000 decided to go back to Liberia while a 1,000 applied to be exempted and continue to remain as refugees in Ghana (Acheampong, 2015).

As part of the local integration process, an integration package comprising legal and economic components has been granted to the refugees who opted for local integration. The legal component involves the issuance of Liberian passports by the Liberian government to the Liberian refugees in Ghana while the government of Ghana granted work and residence permits to them renewable after expiration in two years. For the economic component, the Liberian refugees were given between 400 and 2,400 US dollars depending on the household size. In addition, the government of Ghana gave the Liberian refugees a one-year renewable health insurance package through the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). The refugees are expected to renew their cards on expiration to help them cater for their health needs.

Conceptual and theoretical perspectives

The concept of 'integration' defies a single generally acceptable definition as noted in

the literature (Crisp, 2004; Castle, Korac, Vasta & Vertovec, 2008). The 1997 Refugee Council Working Paper defined integration as quoted in Ager and Strang (2008: 179) as ‘a process which prevents or counteracts the social marginalization of refugees, by removing legal, cultural and language obstacles and ensuring that refugees are empowered to make positive decisions on their future and benefit fully from available opportunities as per their abilities and aspirations’. It is also defined as one’s ability to participate fully in economic, socio-cultural and political spheres in the host country without relinquishing his/her ethno-cultural identity and culture (Valtonen, 2004). Integration is defined in this study as the legal rights and recognition given to refugees to participate fully in all activities in a host country without any economic, socio-cultural and political restrictions.

According to Byrne (2013: 51), “local integration is a process by which refugees acquire and exercise legal rights within the host country, which can include, but are not limited to citizenship”. Local integration is one of the three durable solutions to refugee problems proposed by the UNHCR. UNHCR defined local integration as a complex and gradual process with legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions which imposes considerable demands on both the individual and the receiving society. That in many cases, it ultimately leads to the acquisition of the nationality of the country of asylum. The other two are voluntary repatriation and resettlement in a third country. Voluntary repatriation as defined by UNHCR is the free and voluntary return to one’s country of origin in safety and dignity. It is the solution of choice

for a vast majority of refugees. Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status (UNHCR, 2004). This paper adopts the UNHCR’s definition of local integration since it forms the basis of all other definitions and provides the key framework within which local integration is implemented globally.

In recent times, local integration is being pushed by numerous national and international non-governmental organizations as a workable durable solution for refugees in protracted situations, especially those refugees in the global south (Crisp, 2004). It has three interrelated dimensions as outlined by Crisp (2004). First, as a legal process, refugees are granted rights and entitlements by the host state. By the 1951 Refugee Convention, these include the right to seek economic opportunities, to own and dispose of property, to enjoy freedom of movement and to have access to public services such as education and health. Second, it can be seen as an economic process or right whereby refugees can also engage in various livelihood activities in order to become self-reliant. Per these indicators, refugees cannot be considered to be locally integrated if they are prevented from participating in the local economy resulting in consistent low standard of living among them compared to the poorest members of the host community. The third dimension is the social process which involves both refugees and the host population. The relationship between the two groups should be such that refugees are able to live amongst or alongside the host population, without fear

of systematic discrimination, intimidation or exploitation by the authorities or people of the host country.

To ensure successful integration, Fielden (2008) proposed two main factors. The first is that the degree of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural similarities between the host and refugee population is a significant factor in the initiation of a local integration process. Although cultural similarities undoubtedly enhance integration, the ethnicity of a refugee population should not predicate the durable solutions available to them. The second significant factor in local integration is the length of time a refugee population has spent in a host country (Fielden, 2008). Protracted refugee situations often seem to be the most appropriate for local integration. Extended stays contribute to de facto integration, especially through assimilation of language and formal education.

There are two approaches to the implementation of local integration: spontaneous settlement (self-settlement) and planned settlement (refugee camps). Spontaneous settlement is where refugees are allowed to integrate themselves freely into the host community or country and fend for themselves while planned or camp settlement involves the confinement of refugees to an enclosed area or a clearly demarcated area where they are catered for by the host government and the UNHCR. Each of these two approaches has its merits and demerits. Unlike planned settlement, spontaneous settlement reduces maintenance costs for governments and also helps to prevent the situation where refugees become long-term dependents (Ferris, 1985). On the other hand, planned settlement affords both refugees and governments

a greater sense of security and protection than they would have had outside the camps. Moreover, refugee camps are more visible to attract donor support which is consistent with international refugee regime and the core mandate of the UNHCR (2004).

The study is guided by both Byrne's (2013) theory of national identity and Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual framework on domains of integration which is adapted for the study. Byrne's (2013) theoretical model identified three main national identities that could influence local integration of refugees, namely, ethno-cultural, civic and liberal. The ethno-cultural identity is acquired through birth and kinship and is sustained from one generation to the other. Civic identity is voluntarily acquired through participation in a country's political institutions and accessing all rights and responsibilities expected of every member of that territory while liberal identity subscribes to the philosophy of freedom and opportunities for upward mobility in society (Byrne, 2013). These three identities could influence refugees' perceptions of local integration in Ghana. In their conceptual framework on domains of integration, Ager and Strang (2008) proposed four broad domains which comprised markers and means, social connection, facilitators and foundations with a number of sub-components under each domain. Although Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual framework is on integration of refugees just like local integration as a durable solution to refugees, the former focuses on integration of refugees in a third country (mostly developed countries) which, in most cases, ultimately leads to acquisition of citizenship or naturalization. The latter, however, deals with

the legal dimensions which officially recognize refugees as legal residents in a host country, mostly developing countries in the global south. Owing to differences in socio-cultural and economic context between developed and developing countries, the study adapted Ager and Strang’s (2008) conceptual framework on domains of integration because the domains reflect in the UNHCR’s definition of local integration which has been adopted as the operational definition in the study (Fig. 1). Refugees’ views about local integration in Ghana would be examined in the context of these four domains.

In the framework adapted, foundation constitutes the first domain because for local integration much emphasis is placed on the legal framework as stated in foundation. Thus, the adapted framework comprised foundation, markers and means, social connection and facilitators. Foundation is about citizenship status and rights and responsibilities associated with it and, it can be likened to Byrne’s construction of national identity. Markers and means are basically ways of achieving successful or effective integration through employment, housing, education and health while social connection depicts interactions between refugees and host community in three main ways described as social bonds, social bridges and social links. Social bonds are all socio-cultural and economic interactions among refugees themselves which are expected to make them feel more at home in the host community while social bridges cover the nature of relationship between refugees and the host community which could influence refugees’ level of participation and acceptance in the host community. Social links explore access

to public goods and services such as health, education, housing, water and electricity among others. It is an indication of the degree of inclusiveness or otherwise of refugees in the host community. Language, cultural knowledge, safety, security and stability are aspects of facilitators which directly or indirectly influence the other three domains.

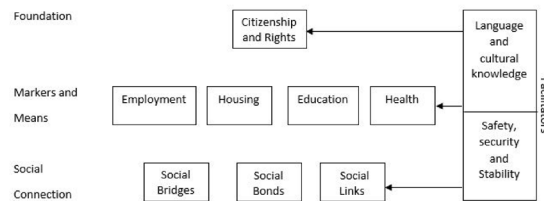


Fig 1: A conceptual framework on domains of integration
Source: Adapted from Ager and Strang (2008)

Study area

The study was conducted at the Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana where the Liberian refugees have resided since the 1990s. The camp was established in 1990 by the Government of Ghana in response to the arrival of Liberians fleeing civil unrest and persecution from the first Liberian civil war between 1989 and 1996. Since then there have been further influx of refugees of varied nationalities into the camp. The camp was originally created to house about 5,000 refugees on a 140 acre land. However, due to the protracted armed conflicts in Africa, the refugee population in the camp has overflowed to nearby villages (Addo, 2012). Buduburam is a rural settlement in the Gomoa District in the Central Region of Ghana (Fig, 2). It is about 35kilometers west of the capital of Ghana, Accra and also about seven kilometers to Kasoa, a fast growing peri-urban town

noted for varied commercial activities. The refugee camp is within the Fetteh land, under the control of the traditional authority of Gomoa-Fetteh. The vegetation is generally grassland interspersed with shrubs and some trees. The area experiences two main rainfalls. The first is usually between April and July while the second is between September and November.

There are over 150 houses (temporary structures) in the camp with an average of four persons in a household (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The Ghanaian government in collaboration with the UNHCR and some NGOs have provided some basic infrastructural facilities in the camp which include Basic and Senior High Schools, potable water, police and fire service stations, electricity, health center and sanitation facilities (Author, 2013). There are limited economic opportunities within the camp: some refugees are engaged in the sale of mobile phones and accessories, petty trading while a few others with the requisite qualifications are employed as nurses and teachers (Porter et al. 2008).

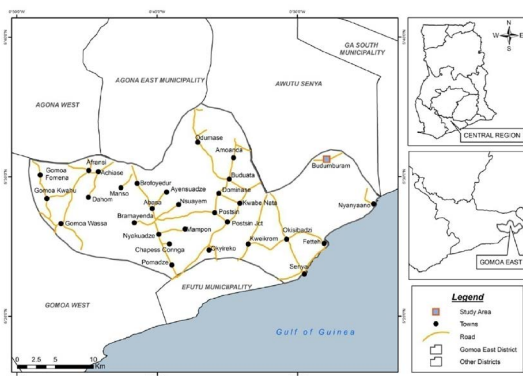


Fig. 2: Map of the Gomoa District showing the Buduburam Refugee Camp.

Source:

GISUnit, DGRP, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.

Data and methods

The data for this paper were obtained from the Liberian refugees who opted for local integration in the Buduburam Camp through in-depth interviews (IDIs). The study focused on the Liberian refugees because the local integration exercise in Ghana targeted Liberian refugees alone. The instrument used was an in-depth interview guide which covered the socio-demographic characteristics of the refugees, their views on legal status, socio-cultural life and economic issues. Official permission was sought and obtained from the Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) and management of the Buduburam refugee camp before the research was undertaken by the researchers themselves. In all, a total of 25 Liberian refugees who opted for local integration were interviewed using the snowball sampling procedure and based on the consent and willingness of the refugees to be interviewed. This technique was adopted on the assumption that Liberian refugees who had applied for local integration were more likely to know themselves.

Moreover, at the time of data collection there were some Liberian refugees who had not applied for local integration as well as refugees from Angola, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Democratic Republic (DR) of Congo in the Buduburam camp, which means that the snowball technique was the most suitable approach for identifying Liberian refugees who applied for local integration. However, we acknowledge the fact that this type of sampling technique could be bias as participants could recommend their friends and cronies to be interviewed. Through one of the officers in the camp, a Liberian refugee

who had applied for local integration was identified and interviewed using a tape-recorder with his consent. After interviewing him, he led the researcher to another one and the process continued until the interviews ended at the 25th participant since no new information emerged. That is, the study got to its saturation point. This was expected because the study units are homogenous by language, socio-economic characteristics and also they have been exposed to the same environmental conditions, opportunities and challenges in the Buduburam camp or in the country. The data collected were transcribed and content analysis was done before teasing out some relevant sections to support the discussions under various themes.

Results and discussion

This section discusses the four main domains of local integration such as foundation, markers and means, social connection and facilitators

Foundation

Foundation is fundamental to the process of integration as it defines the legal status of refugees in a host country. As noted by Ager and Strang (2008) and others, it covers nationality, rights and entitlements that all foreigners including refugees are expected to subscribe to in a host country. These rights are accompanied by responsibilities expected from both the host nation and the refugees. The host nation is expected to ensure that refugees enjoy the rights depending on the nation's sense of citizenship and nationhood while refugees are also expected to obey the laws of the host nation. The study revealed

that Liberian refugees who had opted for local integration in Ghana had been registered for Liberian passports but they had not received the passports at the time of the study. The Liberian passports give them the legal status to live in Ghana but some expressed disappointment about the fact that they would be given Liberian passports instead of Ghanaian passports. To them, it contradicted the integration process because they had been registered with National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) which is solely meant for Ghanaians to access healthcare in the country.

They told us that if you want to stay, choose integration. I chose integration but they gave me and my daughters Liberian passport but we have NHIS, work and residence permits too. When we want to register which one should we use?: the NHIS card or the passport? They should give us Ghanaian passports (Female, 40years old, 11years in the camp, unemployed).

The desire for Ghanaian passport by some Liberian refugees indicates that they are willing to accept Ghanaian citizenship to consolidate their status as refugees who are prepared to be integrated into the Ghanaian society. This group, as noted in Byrne's (2013) theory of national identity, can be associated with the civic identity of citizenship and therefore have positive disposition for local integration in Ghana. It is instructive to note that to acquire a Ghanaian passport, one has to first acquire a Ghanaian citizenship. The constitution of Ghana clearly states that one can become a Ghanaian citizen either by birth, marriage or naturalization. In this case, it is possible for a Liberian refugee who has

agreed to be locally integrated into Ghana to first acquire a Ghanaian citizenship through either marriage or naturalization before applying for a passport.

However, others reported that they would be comfortable with the Liberian passport because they were first and foremost Liberians and moreover they were still under the protection of the UNHCR. This group, from Byrne's (2013) theory of national identity, subscribes to the ethno-cultural identity, and therefore are less likely to acquire Ghanaian citizenship and passport when they become locally integrated in Ghana because of their strong emotional attachment to their home country. For example, a 29-year old male refugee who had lived in the camp for 23 years had this to say: *I am still a Liberian and I am proud of my identity just that I have decided to integrate in Ghana under the protection of the UNHCR. The Liberian passport is ok, it makes me feel proud.*

Others however felt that they had already integrated themselves into the Buduburam community because they have been enjoying some rights such as freedom of movement, access to public services such as healthcare, security, formal education among others, which made them feel already integrated. These rights being enjoyed by the refugees as any Ghanaian is consistent with previous studies by (Duke et al. 1999; O'Neil, 2016). For instance, O'Neil (2016) pointed out that equality is a primary right which will lead to other rights such as right of citizenship, family reunification and equality in legislation and policies.

On their responsibilities, the refugees reported their readiness to obey the laws of the state. They indicated that since they were being

integrated into Ghana, they would be law abiding citizens so as not to disturb the peace and stability of the country. All the refugees interviewed said it behooves them to obey the laws of the host country. As noted by Information Centre on Asylum and Refugees in 2006, that in recognizing refugees' rights, the issue of responsibility arises. As refugees enjoy the same rights as the host citizens, they are legally expected to honour their responsibilities to the host country (Information Centre on Asylum and Refugees (ACAF), 2006). *I do not have any problem with anyone. Am peaceful... Yes, me and police no get problem before since I came to Ghana so wherever I stay, I will obey the law (Female, 43years old, 13years in the camp, unemployed).*

Markers and means

Markers and means refer to socio-economic opportunities such as employment, housing, education and health that refugees could access for their personal development. As indicated above, the refugees were given some money (i.e. between 400 and 2,400 US dollars depending on the household size) to live on as part of the local integration package but some refugees reported that the amount was woefully inadequate (verbal communication with some refugee leaders in the camp). They have also been given residence and working permit which means that they could secure jobs in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy.

Prior to the implementation of the local integration package, the refugees were mostly engaged in the informal sector economic activities such as the sale of mobile phones and accessories, petty trading, dress-making,

electrical and laundry works in the camp. This is consistent with earlier studies in the Buduburam camp which also found out that the refugees were mostly engaged in the informal sector businesses for survival (Author, 2013). It has also been noted in Nigeria that refugees were engaged in informal business activities to supplement the material support from the international community. According to these authors, while female refugees engaged in petty trading and weaving, the men engaged in sawmill and Okada (motor bike use as a taxi for commercial purposes) in order to generate income for their upkeep (Author, 2012).

In Ghana, three main factors account for the involvement of Liberian refugees in the informal sector businesses. First, they use their human and social capitals to explore possible opportunities in the informal sector. Second, the large population of both refugees and indigenes in the Buduburam community constitute the market for goods and services sold, and the third is the proximity of the camp to Kasoa, one of the fastest growing commercial centres in the country which is located near the national capital, Accra. Some refugees go there to engage in trading or head portage (Carrying of loads of various goods for a fee) while others buy goods in bulk and retail them in the camp (Porter et al., 2008). From the study, it was established that some refugees preferred working in the informal sector because of the long bureaucratic procedures involved in securing formal sector employment (Porter et al., 2008). Muus (1997) and da Costa (2006) also observed some barriers that prevent refugees from gaining employment in the formal sector. For example, da Costa (2006) contends

that refugees face in entering domestic labour markets include legal and administrative difficulties, language barriers, socio-cultural differences and high unemployment levels in the host country.

In the study, some Liberian refugees complained of not being able to secure jobs in the formal sector. This might be due to the rising levels of unemployment in the country coupled with the fact that some refugees could not produce proof of previous qualifications and experiences, and even where they can, some employers may not recognize them or may simply be biased in favour of indigenes.

I am not employed, after school I applied to so many places but I did not secure any job. I did engineering at Takoradi Polytechnic but am not getting any job; sometimes I repair people's electrical gadgets in the camp to get small money (Male, 29 years old, 22years in the camp, unemployed). I am selling phones, it's ok...I cannot work in the government sector because I do not have my certificates here with me. I completed college but I left my certificates in Liberia. The authorities have to help us expand our businesses and become self-reliant in Ghana (Male, 40years old, 13years in the camp, phones seller).

Housing could also influence a refugee's decision on local integration. From the study, all the participants wanted the government of Ghana and the UNHCR to provide them with accommodation. They compared the local integration exercise in Ghana to that of Liberia where the government ever provided accommodation for Sierra Leone refugees as part of a local integration package. This is also consistent with previous studies of Glover

et al., (2001) and da Costa (2006). For example, Glover et al. (2001) pointed out that housing for refugees impacts positively on refugees' emotional and physical well-being as it enables refugees to feel at home. Da Costa (2006) also asserts that housing problems are fundamentally different in different regions of the world due to lack of affordable housing compatible with employment possibilities as a severe problem for recognized refugees in many regions. Ghana has a housing deficit of 1.7 million (Andoh, 2014) and therefore it will be very difficult to provide accommodation for refugees unless UNHCR solicits donor support to provide some low cost houses for refugees who have opted for local integration in Ghana.

Access to formal education is one of the social factors that could facilitate or constrain local integration of refugees in a country. It was observed that some of the refugees had children who attended school in Ghana. For example, a female Liberian refugee had this to say: My daughter, Edwina is in class four at St. Joseph School (Female, 38years old, 23years in the camp, petty trader). Moreover, some of the refugees reported that they had their formal education in the country while others indicated that their children are schooling in Ghana.

I had my education in Ghana...Yes, from the primary level to Takoradi Polytechnic (tertiary). I had the basic education in the camp until I went to Takoradi Polytechnic (Male, 29years old, 22years in the camp, unemployed). My children are in school, we belong to the society now, they will make a lot of Ghanaian friends and get job when they complete their education (Female, 33years old, 17years in

the camp, seamstress).

This means that some of the children of refugees who were born either in Ghana or brought along by their parents/guardians into the country accessed some formal education in Ghana. Formal education provides avenue for learning local languages. As Jones (2001) rightly put it, formal education provides opportunity for interaction and cultural integration. Some children of the refugees learnt the local language in school. This means that access to formal education could facilitate Liberian refugees' integration in Ghana.

Access to healthcare was another social issue explored in the study. The finding revealed that Liberian refugees who opted for local integration were registered with the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and issued the card which officially is limited to only Ghanaian nationals. All the participants reported using their cards to access health care without paying any fees for the services received.

When my mother was sick it was the health insurance that we used at the hospital. The drugs were given to us free of charge (Female, 19 years old, 11years in the camp, student).

This observation is consistent with a previous study by Grahl-Madsen that refugees without sufficient resources are equally entitled to social and medical assistance on the same conditions as nationals. It also supports Ager and Strang's (2008) assertion that good health enables better participation in society, and the supply of appropriate health care shows the responsiveness of society to the needs of new members such as refugees. There are however some barriers such as language differences, inaccessibility of information

about healthcare services available, especially some specialized services, gender and cultural differences in healthcare delivery which might prevent refugees from accessing the mainstream health system in some host countries (Ager and Strang, 2008).

Social connection

Social interactions and linkages between refugees and members of the host community have been widely documented as a pre-requisite for effective integration of refugees (Ager and Strang, 2008; Porter et al. 2008; Castles et al, 2001; Agblorti, 2011; Author, 2013). This section employs the concept of social connection to describe the nature of interactions between refugees and the host community. As indicated in the conceptual framework, social connection comprises social bonding, social bridges and social links. There are enough evidence of social bonding among the refugees in the Buduburam Camp as indicated in the excerpts.

We the Liberian refugees have formed tribal group associations to help each other in times of need and also practice our culture and tradition for our children to learn. I belong to the Krahn tribe, the tribe of late sergeant Samuel Doe. Every year on 27th July, we come together to celebrate our country's Independent's Day and also on May 6th, we celebrate the birth day of the late sergeant Doe to remember him. We wear T-shirts and go out on a procession through some principal streets, we organize games and prepare food for ourselves and also share some news from our country (Male, 45

years, 21 years in the camp, a teacher). I enjoy socialization in the camp; it reduces stress, loneliness, etc (Female, 34 years, 14 years in the camp, trader).

The opportunity for refugees of the same ethnic background to interact has been found to have various benefits such as to maintain their customs and religion, talk in their own language, celebrate their traditions, exchange news from their home country, reduce depression and provide avenue for getting employment (Muller, 1998; Duke, Sales & Gregory, 1999). These interactions foster unity, friendliness and make refugees feel more at home which contributes towards effective integration.

Social bridges, conceptualized as absence of conflicts, togetherness and friendliness between refugees and the host community, are a way of promoting local integration of refugees (Ager and Strang, 2008). Some refugees reported cordial relationships between them and some Ghanaians in the Buduburam community. These observations are consistent with Woolcock's (1998) findings that friendliness from the settled community is very important in helping refugees to feel more secured in the host country.

We all live peaceful here; we do not fight each other. Sometimes you will see Ghanaians and Liberians chatting. We (refugees) buy from them (indigenes) in the market. We (refugees) attend the Buduburam community school and the hospital here with the Ghanaians. (Male, 24years old, 11years in the camp, unemployed). I have never quarreled with any Ghanaian before, I am free with them;

they come to my shop here to sow their cloths.....These two ladies (apprentices) are Ghanaians. We live peaceful in the camp (Female, 26 years old, 15 years in the camp, petty trader). Everything is peaceful, at church I belong to the women's association. Both Ghanaians and Liberians are in that association. We go for meetings and visit a member when he/she is sick, we help ourselves... Yes, when my shop got burnt, the church supported me with money. I feel I belong to the community (Female, 33years old, 17years in the camp, seamstress).

On their ability to access state institutions, it was observed that most of the refugees reported that they access healthcare and the services of the Police and Fire Service whenever the need arises. These social structures or institutions of state are what Ager and Strang (2008) call social links which promote social development. The following was a narration by one Liberian refugee who ever used the services of some state institutions:

When my shop got burnt, the fire service people came to quench the fire. The electricity people also came but I paid some money to them for their services (Female, 33years old, 17years in the camp, seamstress).

The refugees are quite optimistic that the friendly relationships between them and Ghanaians coupled with their ability to access the structures of the state could facilitate the local integration process. This observation supports Bulcha's (1998) description of social integration as the way refugees relate to the social environment in the host country.

Access to these social services could contribute in no small ways in making refugee feel much at home in the country.

Facilitators

Facilitators are factors that could promote or constrain local integration of refugees. Although facilitators as stated in the original framework are one of the domains of integration, in the adapted framework they are presented as mechanisms or catalysts that influence the other three domains of integration (Foundation, Markers and Means and Social connection) directly or indirectly. The motivation to integrate and access citizenship and rights (foundation) of a host country, explore public services and existing opportunities (Employment, education, housing, health, etc.) and enjoy social connectedness in the host community will depend to a great extent on how refugees perceive their safety, security and stability in the host community. Where refugees do not feel physically safe due to periodic violence or feel emotionally unsafe because of intimidations, harassment, verbal abuse and discrimination, they are not likely to opt for local integration or feel at home when they become locally integrated. For example, evidence from some studies in the Buduburam Camp indicates that some refugees experienced verbal abuse, harassment and discrimination at school and also in their daily business activities in the informal sector (Agblorti, 2011; Author, 2013). On stability, the refugees have lived in a stable community, accessed public services (as stated above) and have established some relationships among themselves and the host community, which is necessary for local integration.

Similarly, language could promote or constrain the other domains of integration.

Communication is very vital in any human setting. As pointed out by ECRE (1999a: 27), “communication is an important thing, because it is important to speak the language; otherwise you cannot talk of integration.” It was found out that most of the refugees cannot speak the Twi language which is the main local language spoken in the Buduburam community. This observation ties in with the findings that refugees’ inability to speak the main Ghanaian language (Twi) spoken in the Buduburam community had hampered both their livelihood opportunities and social networks with Ghanaians (Porter et al. 2008). For example, this is what some refugees said about the local language.

I speak only our language (Liberian English). I have been in the camp for so many years but I cannot speak the Twi because I do not interact much with Ghanaians outside the camp (Male, 51years, 17 years in the camp, unemployed). My brother, we (Liberian refugees) do not go out. We are always here and the Ghanaians too do not visit us always. We only speak the Liberian English in the camp. It is when I go to church that they speak Twi and somebody translates it into English (Female, 29 years old, 13 years in the camp, hairdresser).

Having some cultural knowledge of a host community could enhance the domains of integration stated above. Cultural knowledge of a host country could increase the desire to access citizenship of that country, ensure effective utilization of public services and opportunities available as well as make one feel more connected into the social fabric of the host community. In the literature, food and dressing are among the cultural issues that refugees are often quizzed on to establish

their preparedness or otherwise for local integration. This study also explored the refugees’ views regarding Ghanaian cuisine. Some refugees reported that their prolonged stay in the country has enabled them to become used to some Ghanaian foods. Access to both Liberian and Ghanaian foods in the camp is evidence of acculturation which could promote local integration of refugees in Ghana. Although differences between Liberians and Ghanaians regarding dressing had been noted in previous studies (Author, 2013; Byrne, 2013) this study found out that in the camp some Liberians dress occasionally like their Ghanaian counterparts.

I am now used to both Ghanaian and Liberian food...I can eat banku, kenkey and every Ghanaian food. I also eat Liberian food; cassava leaves, rice, potato leaves, and dummo which is just like what you people call fufu (Female, 56years old, 23years in the camp, Trader).

Conclusions

This paper employed Byrne’s theoretical model of national identity and adapted Ager and Strang’s (2008) conceptual framework to explore local integration of Liberian refugees’ in Ghana. From the study, local integration of Liberian refugees in Ghana was adopted by the government of Ghana for those who, for one reason or the other, refused to be repatriated to Liberia. Evidence from the study indicates that local integration of Liberian refugees in Ghana is being facilitated by the governments of Ghana, Liberia, Denmark and United States. The study revealed that some Liberian refugees who

subscribed to civic and liberal identity according to Byrne's model, were already prepared for local integration as they indicated their preference for Ghanaian and not Liberian passports and their preparedness to abide by the laws of the country.

The four domains of Ager and Strang (2008) provided a suitable context for examining the views of Liberian refugees on local integration in Ghana. Since most of the Liberian refugees have been living in the country for more than two decades, they had already accessed and continue to use public services and other socio-economic opportunities available within and outside the Buduburam Camp to sustain themselves. For instance, even before the proposal for local integration, some refugees were already engaged in informal sector activities like petty trading and artisanship for their upkeep while others, particularly those who were unemployed, had established social networks with some indigenes which enabled them to obtain some economic support.

Beside the inability of some refugees to speak the dominant local language (Twi or Fanti), the other elements of facilitators such as safety, security, stability and cultural knowledge of the host community or country do not pose challenges to local integration, which means that local integration of Liberian refugees is feasible and the refugees themselves have expressed their preparedness for it. What is not clear now is the type of local integration approach (i.e. planned settlement or spontaneous settlement) that the government of Ghana would adopt since either of them has its merits and demerits for both the refugees and the country.

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VOLUME 8
NO.2
NOVEMBER, 2017

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST - GHANA