



Does teacher training for refugees contribute to post-conflict reconstruction of educational systems?

Evidence from West Africa

By Susan Shepler

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Printed in the United States of America

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Mission Statement

Founded in 1933, the IRC is a global leader in emergency relief, rehabilitation, protection of human rights, post-conflict development, resettlement services and advocacy for those uprooted or affected by violent conflict and oppression.

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JULY 2009

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Acknowledgements

Thanks first to the many former IRC teachers who took the time to participate in the research and share their stories with us. Thanks also to the local research team: David Mackieu, Sia Mani, and Wusu Kargbo in Sierra Leone and Fertiku Harris, Pauline Gborlawoe, and Nathaniel Boakai in Liberia.

Thanks to all the people who supported and implemented the Refugee Education Program in Guinea with such dedication.

For this research, several people and institutions provided logistical support (including housing and transportation) over the five months in West Africa. Special thanks are due to Shellac Davies, Frances Fortune, Rebecca Besant, Oscar Bloh, Osman Kamara, and Abdul Thulah.

International Rescue Committee staff were particularly helpful in Nzerekore, Kenema, Kailahun, Monrovia, and Ganta. David Walker took an interest in the research from the beginning and patiently answered many questions. Isha Kamara helped with travel arrangements in Freetown and Mayeni Smart helped with submitting invoices. Janelle Nodhturft provided research assistance, and Alan Ford helped with mapmaking with the support of American University. Radha Rajkotia was a calm presence in a crisis, and Bidemi Carrol was an intelligent interlocutor and understanding supervisor.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) acknowledges the financial support received from the **NoVo Foundation**, through the **LEGACY Initiative** in producing this publication. The LEGACY Initiative is a 5-year education program contributing to the restructuring of education systems in post-conflict West Africa. Thank you to Jamie Weiss and Adriana Martinez for providing editorial and administrative support in finalizing this publication. Finally, thanks to the **Pearson Foundation** for their ongoing support in bringing this publication to print.

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List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

CBO	community-based organization
DEO	District Education Officer
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education for All
ERNWACA	Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa
GBV	Gender-based violence
GTZ	German Development Agency
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HTC	Higher Teachers Certificate
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEE	Interagency Network on Education in Emergencies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoE	Ministry of Education
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontiers
NGO	nongovernmental organizations
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
PTR	pupil-teacher ratio
TC	Teachers Certificate
TOR	Terms of Reference
TWIN	Today's Women International Network
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEC	West African Examinations Council

I. Executive Summary

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) ran a successful refugee education program in Guinea for 17 years, serving Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees. One aspect of that program included training thousands of refugees as teachers, school administrators, and classroom assistants. This report describes the research project carried out in early 2009 to trace those former refugee teachers and interview them about the influence of the trainings on their lives today, and to find out whether they are currently contributing to the reconstruction of the postwar education systems in their home countries. The aim was to discover the perspective of former refugee teachers on the long-term effects of their training, as well as the challenges they faced reintegrating in their country of origin.

The most challenging aspect of the research was tracing the 2,000 to 4,000 former teachers across Sierra Leone and Liberia. There were very few records, and it was assumed that the former teachers had resettled widely. A seven-person research team from Sierra Leone and Liberia used snowball sampling, informal networks, and mobile phones to trace respondents and collect 640 interviews over a period of several months. The research team used quantitative data, qualitative data, and personal vignettes to investigate the reasons why people chose to continue teaching or to stop teaching. We addressed the difference between the situations in Liberia and Sierra Leone and the relative importance of whether the Ministries of Education accepted the IRC trainings as sufficient to obtain a job on the government payroll. We also conducted a gender analysis of the interview responses. We hope that the responses to the predetermined survey questions and the stories will teach us how better to support teachers and, therefore, how to support quality education systems in postwar countries.

About two-thirds of the sample respondents are still working as teachers. Those who have stayed in the teaching field describe their love of the work, their desire to contribute to the development of their communities and nation, and the lack of other options. Some have found better-paying work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or are working in other professions by choice. Overall, the people we interviewed appreciated the training they received from the IRC in Guinea, and they pointed to multiple ways in which they made use of the trainings after their repatriation. The bad news is that some have left the teaching field in disgust. They describe the low pay and poor conditions of service, and they also complain about the difficulty of getting onto the teaching payrolls, even with the right certification and even in the face of supposed teacher shortages.

The findings from our research can be summarized as follows:

Gender

- Women in our sample are pursuing further training at a rate higher than men.
- A higher percentage of women are employed by NGOs.
- A higher number of women describe themselves as “unemployed.”
- Women face ongoing sexual harassment in the workplace, and they are expected to trade sex for employment.
- A lower percentage of women are working as teachers than are equally trained men.

Location (Rural vs. Urban)

- In our sample, people living in rural areas were more likely to be working as teachers than people in urban areas.
- There is a population of teachers who are happily working in their remote villages and who expect to continue to do so for many years.

Teaching Opportunities in Liberia vs. Sierra Leone

- Liberia's Ministry of Education (MoE) agreed to employ teachers with IRC certification and Sierra Leone's MoE did not.

- Teachers with IRC qualifications find it more difficult to get hired in Liberia than in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leonean respondents were able to make use of the IRC, which included working with them to find employment as teachers.

Our findings make it clear that government-level policy is not sufficient to reintegrate former refugee teachers. If the state does not budget for hiring teachers, it will not matter whether teachers have certification or not. We also found that teachers still face challenges at the local level, regardless of national-level policy. This points to the importance of the local level and the school level in understanding teachers' experiences. It is not enough to give people skills and then expect that they can be entrepreneurial and change the education system on their own. They need to be supported from within the system to work for change.

There is a pool of trained teachers who want to teach but cannot.

Many trained teachers are not teaching, and 40 to 50% of teachers actually teaching in schools are untrained and unqualified. So, there are trained teachers not teaching and untrained teachers teaching. In that counterintuitive situation, our research leaves us with the question of what the best way is to move ahead with rebuilding the education systems of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Recommendations

Our recommendations can be summarized as follows:

Refugee education programs

- Adopt a sub-regional strategy as the right approach to create durable solutions.
- Work with governments in the sending countries from the beginning to achieve test results and award certifications that will have validity after the student or teacher returns home.
- Investigate the possibility of cross-border certification for teachers in refugee situations.
- Continue to provide training in introductory pedagogy, school administration, and other relevant topics.

Post-conflict education reconstruction

- Work with former IRC teachers as effective local partners for numerous projects.
- Work with teachers who are already working in schools, especially in rural areas.
- Support in-service trainings and continue distance education.
- Focus on teacher retention rather than teacher recruitment.

II. Introduction

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been supporting education for refugees in Guinea since 1991, when the first waves of refugees arrived from Liberia and began setting up informal schools in Guinea. Those refugees were later joined by refugees from Sierra Leone. Enrollments in the IRC education program grew from 12,000 in 1991 to 81,000 at the peak in 1999. By 2007, after 17 years of operation, hundreds of thousands of students, teachers, and administrators had passed through the IRC schools.

In addition to providing a variety of educational opportunities for refugee men, women, and children in Guinea, the Refugee Education Program also provided important professional training and development opportunities for male and female teachers and other education personnel such as classroom assistants, head teachers, and education managers. Initially, the beneficiaries of the program in Guinea were understood to be the students; only later was it understood that teachers were also beneficiaries. Subsequently, the training and certification of teachers grew to be an important part of the IRC's Refugee education program. Although the needs of post-conflict reconstruction were not the primary concern at the outset, the IRC's focus on teacher recruitment, training, and education created a pool of qualified professionals who could, it was hoped, contribute to the development and expansion of the education systems in their countries of origin upon repatriation.

Study Objective

The objective of this study is to better understand the ways in which teachers and educational administrators educated and trained in refugee contexts can contribute to rebuilding education systems and/or their communities in their countries of origin upon repatriation. Using West Africa as a case study, our research will provide insight into the following questions:

- What factors in the lives of repatriated refugee teachers influence their decisions to continue teaching?
- Do repatriated refugee teachers take on educational leadership roles within their school or community? What factors influence this decision?
- In what ways other than teaching are repatriated refugee teachers involved in the education field?
- Are repatriated refugee teachers who have not remained in education involved in developing their communities in other ways? If so, what are they?
- How does gender affect the roles of repatriated refugee teachers?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the following hypothesis:

Refugee education in Guinea supports the development of a professional cadre of teachers and other educators who can contribute meaningfully to the post-conflict reconstruction of education systems and to the development of their communities upon repatriation to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

This study is unique. Because it does not measure the immediate outputs of an intervention, it is not an evaluation of IRC's teacher training program in Guinea, nor is it an assessment of the educational systems of Sierra Leone or Liberia. Rather, this study investigates the collateral benefits of the program several years after the program's conclusion. For this study, we interviewed former refugees who are currently working as teachers as well as those who are not in order to evaluate the reasons why some decided to leave the teaching profession and some decided to stay on.¹

¹ Shriberg (2007: 32) suggests this new direction: "This study sample was comprised of teachers working in Liberia at the time that the research was conducted, and it does not include teachers who had left their jobs earlier. A future study, for example, might investigate both teachers who are currently employed and those who used to teach but are no longer employed in the profession."

Methodologically, assessing the long-term effects of training is not straightforward. Respondents have been impacted by multiple events over the years, including possible multiple relocations, trainings from other agencies, and further formal education. We addressed these challenges by focusing, at the individual level, on skills learned, career trajectories, challenges faced after repatriation, and leadership roles undertaken. This focus leads us to conclusions about the structural issues at the *national* level (as experienced by individuals) that stand in the way of positive change in the educational system and to recommendations for both policy and research in both the refugee and post-repatriation settings.

Literature Review

The research for this study is based on the assumption that there is a shortage of teachers in the fragile education systems of Liberia and Sierra Leone. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics 2006 report entitled "Teachers and Education Quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015" states the following:

The study is important because we know from numerous studies that there is a shortage of teachers in sub-Saharan Africa, which is one important factor hindering the attainment of universal primary completion in 2015 – one of the millennium development goals.

However, in this UNESCO study, there is only one data point for both Sierra Leone and Liberia on the number of teachers since 1990. A more recent study (Pearce 2009: 9) cites UNESCO 2008 figures claiming a "trained teacher gap" in Liberia of 11,150 and in Sierra Leone of 18,350. The author explains that these numbers are so large partially because of the large influx of students, and she agrees that "many countries (in West Africa) have unreliable statistics which include non-existent teachers." I would argue that we simply do not have reliable data on the number of teachers in either of those countries.

The issue is more complex than the number of trained teachers. Indeed, there are many questions surrounding the contribution of teachers to the rebuilding of education systems. Very little is known about how to effectively rebuild a teaching corps in post-conflict contexts such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. Equally, there is a dearth of information about the ways in which refugee teachers can or cannot contribute to rebuilding education systems upon repatriation. The World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), among other organizations, recognize that a better understanding of teachers' lives and the factors that influence their (non) participation in the education sector is important when developing effective strategies for rebuilding post-conflict education.

In order to understand whether former IRC teachers engage with the educational systems in Sierra Leone and Liberia and how they do it, we need to understand the issues important to teachers. I will give a brief review of some recent work on teacher motivation, teacher compensation, and teacher retention.

Teacher Motivation

Bennel and Akeampond (2007) summarize the findings of their large study on teacher motivation in sub-Saharan Africa, a study funded by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID). The overwhelming consensus is that teachers are seriously underpaid, and that this, more than anything else, is the key factor undermining teacher morale and motivation. Other key determinants of teacher motivation in developing countries include lack of accountability, conflict and insecurity, general decline in the occupational status of teachers, poor working and living conditions, and a policy environment that emphasizes increased enrollment over the professional needs of teachers.

Harding and Mansaray (2007) produced the Sierra Leone case study based on interviews with teachers and head teachers at schools in Freetown and Makeni, and they concluded the following:

The main finding of this study is that there is a serious teacher motivation crisis in Sierra Leone. Only 30 percent of the teachers at the survey primary schools are satisfied with their jobs. Most of these satisfied teachers are unqualified or work in private schools. Out of the eight stakeholders interviewed all of them thought that teachers were dissatisfied with their jobs because of late payment of salaries, inadequate pay structure and an unfair teacher recruitment policy.

In the larger study, Bennell and Akeampong found that “qualified teachers should be more competent and thus have higher levels of job satisfaction. Ensuring that all teachers are qualified might be expected to be an important way of improving and maintaining high levels of professional commitment and motivation. However, in nearly all the case-study countries, no sizeable differences exist between the motivation levels of qualified and unqualified teachers.” Nonetheless, the demand to upgrade qualifications and attend in-service trainings is still high.

Teacher Compensation

It is widely acknowledged that teachers in West Africa are not paid enough. A recent ActionAid report (Marphatia, et al., 2007) argues that wage ceilings imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the greatest threat to achieving quality education in developing countries.

Sierra Leone is faced with the dual challenge of reconstructing schools destroyed during the 11-year conflict and providing free and quality education to all children. In recent years there has been a dramatic, four-fold increase in enrolment in schools, but this has not been matched with increases in trained teachers. Lack of resources has led to a high pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of 57:1. Two-in-five teachers are untrained ‘para-professionals’ and the attrition rate is high, with many teachers leaving after four years’ service due to chronic delay or absence of pay and poor working conditions. A World Bank-funded project to build additional schools had to be slowed down, as **too many schools did not have adequate teachers due to a cap on teacher hiring**. To prevent over-flooding in this limited number of classrooms, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) has set a ceiling on the maximum enrolment for each school. The result is that children are being turned away at the schools gates. (page ix)

Interestingly, they seem to be arguing that there is not enough money to pay all the teachers needed, not that there are not enough trained teachers.

Teacher Retention

The central issue may well be how to keep trained teachers in the profession despite the lack of resources. There seems to have been a (somewhat linear) assumption that providing training to teachers would improve the education system (and that providing training in student-centered pedagogy would improve the quality of teaching). Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature on the long-term impacts of teacher training in general, and in a complex setting it is not clear that this assumption will hold. For various reasons, trained teachers may leave the teaching profession faster than new ones can be trained.

The Interagency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) has developed a list of outstanding research questions, including questions about teacher retention. Questions such as these are necessary to address the complex problem of the long-term impact of teacher training.

The power of an individual teacher to change a system depends on many factors: the motivations of the individual teacher, the receptiveness of school leaders and community members, the structure of the ministry of education (MoE), and the policies of international donors. There is an obvious need for empirical data about long-term effectiveness of interventions. This project is an attempt to ground research in the lived experience of individual repatriated refugee teachers, and to reflect on the connection between pedagogy training in a refugee camp ten years ago and life choices today.

III. Background

IRC's Education Program in Guinea

IRC's education program in Guinea has been well documented.² It is fair to conclude that the IRC education program in Guinea is widely seen as successful and, indeed, as a model for providing education in other refugee situations.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) asked the IRC in 1991 to assist groups of Liberian refugees in Guinea who had started setting up their own schools. Due to the changing fortunes of war in the regions, IRC administrators had to deal with a constantly fluctuating population of refugee students and teachers from 1991 to 2008, first from Liberia, then from Sierra Leone, and then from Liberia again. They had to merge the curricula of the Sierra Leonean and Liberian education systems. They had to bargain with the government for access to school buildings and, in the end, had to build their own. They had to hire, train, supervise, and pay thousands of teachers. Eventually, they had to lobby for the refugee students' right to sit the West African Examinations Council exams that other children in the region benefited from. Generally, the success of the program has been measured in terms of the tens of thousands of children who had the opportunity to be educated that they otherwise would not have had.

There are other impacts of this large, seventeen-year-long program. According to Tenenbaum (2004: 59): "At its height of activity, IRC Guinea employed a few thousand people with teachers consistently making up the largest percentage of staff. As many as 4,000 teachers and support staff in fact are said to have worked for the vast school structure." Table 1 shows the size of the IRC education program in Guinea by year.

Table 1: Size of the IRC Guinea education program by year (1990 to 2003)

	Students in Refugee Schools	Number of IRC Teachers	Number of Refugee Schools
1990	12,000	–	–
1991	26,926	653	49
1992	38,386	841	122
1993	48,761	1,119	166
1994	54,430	1,209	165
1995	60,033	1,212	143
1996	66,929	1,380	171
1997	60,799	1,374	165
1998	69,367	1,574	161
1999	78,533	1,729	163
2000	69,899	1,780	135
2001	19,446	418	15
2002	26,446	467	26
2003	27,989	642	26

Source: Adapted from Tenenbaum (2004).

² See, for example, Deborah Jones's 2006 MA thesis for Tufts University, *Education in Complex Emergencies: A Case Study of the IRC Guinea Education Program*. A version of this review entitled *Starting Schools Under The Mango Trees* was also recently released by IRC. Internal IRC documents include Sasha Tenenbaum's 2004 report, *History and Lessons Learned, IRC Guinea: 1991-2004*, as well as Wendy Smith and Rebecca Winthrop's 2002 *Internal Evaluation of IRC Education Programs 1999-2002*. Tenenbaum provides a very useful timeline of events in the history of IRC Guinea's education program.

Providing teacher training was necessary to the functioning of the program. Although the schools “under the mango trees” were started, for the most part, by refugees who were teachers before their displacement, it was necessary to hire many new teachers as well.³ When the IRC started running the schools, and even providing a meager stipend to volunteers, they introduced hiring standards, school supervision, and teacher training. They also began to suggest the idea of refugee education as an opportunity for introducing educational change. As Smith and Winthrop (2002: 27) describe it, the goal was to “slowly move schools towards participatory pedagogic practices, centers for critical thinking and spaces for creativity and appreciation of diversity.”

In addition to the New Teachers Workshop, All Teachers Workshop, Administrators Workshop, and other mainly pedagogy trainings, the IRC started offering a wider range of workshops to its long-time teachers. These included workshops on peace education and conflict resolution, and gender-based violence (GBV), and many others. The IRC offered adult education courses and fellowships for further study in Conakry (which many IRC teachers took advantage of). The health and education programs were linked, and health clubs were started in the schools and later moved into the communities. Some of the teachers became more interested in community health and development work as a result. Tenenbaum (2004: 60) concludes, “In recognition of the importance of training, IRC gradually made yearly in-service workshops mandatory for the teachers and administrators in order to bring the level of qualification up to standard. With this improvement to the quality of instruction, individual IRC teachers were able to enhance their career perspectives in preparation for their eventual repatriation home.”

In 2002, UNHCR/Save the Children released a study entitled “Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone,” which revealed a disturbing pattern of sexual exploitation of refugee children by aid workers and peacekeepers in West Africa. The IRC responded with the Healing Classrooms initiative, and piloted a program of single-sex classrooms. They also introduced the concept of the female teaching assistant, a young woman, often just out of school herself, who would assist in classrooms with male teachers and serve as a support for girl students.⁴ Some of those young women went on to become IRC teachers.

Cross-border Certification

Efforts at cross-border certification are an important element of IRC’s efforts on behalf of the teachers they trained and employed. David Walker, a long-time IRC staffer, reports that there were two major certificates that teachers trained in Guinea acquired: Cert B and Cert C.

Teachers who trained up to 1998 were examined, and those who passed the examinations were given the Cert B (or B Certificate). Between 1999 and 2000, IRC Guinea and Liberia worked with the Division of Teacher Certification and Accreditation at MoE Liberia to study the training offered by IRC Guinea in order to see if the MoE would make it equivalent to any of the MoE certificates. At the end of the study, MoE Liberia decided to equate the Cert B issued by IRC with the Cert C the MoE issues in Liberia.

The IRC Guinea entered into another round of negotiations between 2003 and 2004 with MoE Liberia to utilize teacher training modules used in teacher training colleges in Liberia to train IRC Guinea teachers. As a result of these negotiations, the MoE permitted the use of its training modules in Guinea, and also agreed to examine and accredit the teachers who were trained using them. Successful teachers were issued Cert C by MoE Liberia in 2005.

There were similar negotiations with the MoE in Sierra Leone, but IRC certificates were never accepted as equivalent to any of Sierra Leone’s certificates. I have heard various explanations for this. One is that even before the war Sierra Leone had a more vibrant teacher training and certification program. Another is that the ministry felt threatened by an NGO stepping into their territory. Yet another explanation is that the IRC was arrogant in the meetings with the MoE Sierra Leone. Regardless of the decision not to formally accept IRC trainings, many of the IRC teacher-training precepts have been included in the Distance Education Program currently in operation in Sierra Leone, and IRC Sierra Leone has been working cordially with education officials at all levels.

3 Actually, hiring young people right out of high school or secondary school as teachers was common in Sierra Leone and Liberia even before the war, so it was natural that it should happen in Guinea as well.

4 See Kirk and Winthrop (2008) for a complete assessment of the Female Classroom Assistant program.

A Parallel System

We learn from these reports that IRC Guinea entered the field of what has come to be known as Education in Emergencies almost by accident. In retrospect, the programs are presented as having been well designed; however, one gets the sense in reviewing the historical record that those early pioneers were making it up as they went along, and that they ended up creating a parallel school system to that of the refugees' home countries.⁵ Indeed, in her study of IRC's Guinea education programs, Jones (2006) concludes that IRC program administrators functioned as a de facto Ministry of Education by necessity. She also asserts some of the most critical issues that IRC faced could *only* be handled by strategic, *long-range* planning in order to achieve results that could successfully lead to the goal of repatriation.

The IRC in Guinea and the IRC in Liberia had separate Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) programs that sought to link IRC-trained teachers repatriating from Guinea to jobs in Liberia. Upon their arrival in Liberia, several hundred teachers received repatriation packages of mattresses and bedspreads. The IRC itself could not place teachers, but teachers were provided information on departure from Guinea and IRC Guinea shared a list of all its trained teachers (several times) with the MoE in Liberia. The final report on the PRM states, "Of the 205 teachers that benefited from the current PRM grant, 40% (82) teachers have been deployed and placed on the MOE payroll. The remaining 123 teachers (60%) are volunteers." The IRC also piloted a program to provide teacher housing at five schools where former refugee teachers were working.

The IRC now supports the governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia in improving their teacher training programs. However, according to interviews with the heads of those programs, there has not been any formal attempt by the Liberia and Sierra Leone programs to include the former IRC teachers from Guinea in the training, though some may be participating. Indeed, the IRC lost track of most teachers, but at least twenty went on to work for IRC in their home countries.

The Current Education Systems of Sierra Leone and Liberia

There are many similarities between the Sierra Leonean and Liberian education systems. Although data is hard to come by, neither system was particularly strong even before their respective wars. (Indeed, some analysts point to failures in the pre-war education systems as significant factors in the initiation of the conflicts.) Post-war, these systems face extra challenges with facilities and materials, but they also may have gained greater interest in assistance from the international community. Both have introduced free primary education as part of the Education for All (EFA) goals, but they are generally not meeting the other EFA goals (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009). In the post-war period, both systems are relying on "community schools," staffed primarily by volunteer teachers. There is continuing gender disparity in the student and teacher populations in both systems. Both have started distance education programs for teachers, but this process is more advanced in Sierra Leone.

5 For an interesting analysis of the political implications of the creation of a pseudo-state in the middle of a weak state, see Waters, Tony, and Kim LeBlanc. 2005. "Refugees and Education: Mass Public Schooling without a Nation-State." *Comparative Education Review* 49 (2): 129-147.

IV. Methodology

The research for this study utilized the tracer study methodology. Tracers attempt to elucidate processes and focus on describing activities over time, in this case retrospectively. As described by Cohen (2004), the Bernard van Leer Foundation embraced this methodology as a tool to evaluate the impact of different early childhood programs around the world. Hornby and Symon (1994) describe in detail how to carry out a tracer study in institutional contexts. In explaining the benefits of this methodology, they write, “Tracer studies are a method of identifying and describing organizational processes ... across time and stakeholder group” (167). They describe the tracer study as primarily a qualitative data sampling and collection framework. As a form of non-probability sampling, tracer studies do not attempt to establish random or representative samples. Rather than search for a “generalizable person,” they seek a specific group of relevant people (Hornby and Symon 1994: 169). While there are benefits and drawbacks to this methodology regarding the ability to generalize and reliability, our research lent itself to a sampling strategy, because the target size and locations of the participants were unknown at the onset of the study.

Defining and Locating the Sample Population: Clues in Guinea?

The goal of the research was to trace as many of the former IRC teachers as possible and interview them about the impact of the IRC trainings on their lives. Reports estimated that there was a population of between 2,000 and 4,000 former teachers, but we did not have a firm number of how many people passed through the IRC system as teachers and classroom assistants. This led to many challenges, as we had to search for clues and leads in order to find subjects to interview.

In order to identify the teachers and teacher assistants trained by the IRC, I first gathered written records from the IRC office in Nzerekore, Guinea. At the beginning of the research period (January 2009), I discovered that the IRC Guinea program was shutting down for good and that all the offices were being closed. Consequently, one of the first tasks of the research was to travel to Nzerekore in Guinée Forestière, where the last remaining IRC office in Guinea was located, and to try to access as many records as possible. Unfortunately, records from before 2000 were destroyed or lost. I was able to access payroll documents and letters of attestation, but I struggled to reconstruct a master list. Although I discovered a few repatriation lists with resettlement decisions listed, these documents proved to be marginally useful in helping me locate these teachers for a number of reasons. The documents recorded only where people expected that they would settle and, therefore, did not provide an accurate picture of where participants were located currently.

However, I was able to locate and interview former IRC teachers still living in Guinea and working in independent English-language schools. They provided valuable information about where their erstwhile colleagues had repatriated. Information from some former IRC Guinea staff now working for the IRC in Liberia and Sierra Leone also gave a general picture of the whereabouts of most of our sample. We utilized the few written records available and information on the geographical distribution of participants as a basis, and we focused our tracing strategy on following leads to locate potential participants.

Snowball Sampling

To reach out to our participants, we relied on snowball sampling. Taking advantage of personal networks, we contacted former IRC teachers in Guinea and the IRC staff in Freetown and Monrovia who had participated in the Guinea program to gather information on the names, locations, workplaces, and/or telephone numbers of *other* former IRC teachers. To complement our efforts, I made fliers to reach out to former teachers and placed these in areas where we suspected former IRC teachers would congregate: the ministries of education, colleges and universities, IRC offices, and the teacher’s union office. (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the flier).

Overall, our efforts to track former IRC teachers were remarkably successful. A handful of individuals responded to the fliers, but the vast majority of respondents were located through personal references. Though there were some false leads, or leads that were difficult to follow (e.g., “she’s selling in the Paynesville marketplace”), they often led us to the very people we were looking for. We went to interview one teacher at a school in Kailahun and found ten eager participants. On other occasions we found that following up with tenuous leads directed us to a dozen other reliable

leads. The increased usage of mobile phones facilitated our success, because we could easily contact participants once we had a phone number.

In the end, our team completed 640 interviews over a data-collection period of several months. (The demographics of the sample are described in the Findings section of this report). Based on the estimate of 2,000 to 4,000 former teachers, we reached about a third to a sixth of the total population. Indeed, at the time we ceased the data collection, we still had approximately a thousand active leads we could have followed. These results attest to the strength of the networks formed among the IRC teachers. To check our numbers, I reviewed the sparse payroll records and calculated the percentage of teachers interviewed for several schools in different geographical locations. The results are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Breakdown of teachers interviewed using payroll records

Date	School	Region	Teachers interviewed (%)
August 2001	Boreah II	Kissidougou	19
August 2001	Kountaya II Secondary	Kissidougou	19
April 2001	Foret	Nzerekore	39
2001?	Kaliah	Forecariah	31
2001?	Layah	Forecariah	13
November 2002	Samba Elementary	Dabola	24

These results support our estimates of reaching approximately one third of the total population of former teachers. They also indicate that we achieved a reasonable geographical distribution for at least one year's cohort.

The Research Team

From the outset, I wanted to recruit a diverse team of research assistants who would be involved in all stages of the research project. I sought team members with gender diversity and with different employment experiences. Specifically, I wanted some former refugee teachers from Guinea as well as individuals with experience in teacher training in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Finally, we hoped to recruit individuals who were not otherwise employed for a period of several months and who could operate easily in the areas where we believed most of the former IRC teachers were located.

The final team included the following seven members:

Susan Shepler (female), the lead researcher

Ph.D. anthropologist with ethnographic and evaluation experience in Sierra Leone and Liberia

David Mackieu (male), Sierra Leonean

One of the originators of the refugee schools in Guinea, now a gender activist in Sierra Leone, assigned to Kailahun

Sia Mani (female), Sierra Leonean

Recipient of an IRC scholarship to study accounting in Conakry, former IRC Guinea staff, assigned to Kono

Wusu Kargbo (male), Sierra Leonean

Never a refugee, former Head of Education Department at Milton Margai College of Education in Freetown, assigned to Kambia and Freetown

Fertiku Harris (male), Liberian

Former Education Coordinator for IRC Guinea, assigned to Zorzor

Pauline Gborlawoe (female), Liberian

Former girls and women's education officer for IRC Liberia, assigned to Ganta and Gbarnga

Nathaniel Boakai (male), Liberian

Former refugee in Guinea who started working with IRC Liberia as a community mobilizer after repatriation, assigned to Voinjama

The variety of experience and perspectives became a valuable asset as we designed the study and analyzed data. For example, some members provided valuable insight as females. In other instances, those with vast IRC experience provided valuable background information about IRC's history in Guinea.

Team Orientation and Training in Qualitative Research Methods

After recruiting the seven research assistants, we held a week-long orientation in Sierra Leone and Liberia. This orientation introduced the research project and provided training on qualitative research methods, with a focus on tracer studies and ethical practice in research. In Sierra Leone, the meeting was held in Kenema at a private residence. In Liberia, the meeting was held at the IRC office in Monrovia. We covered the following topics:

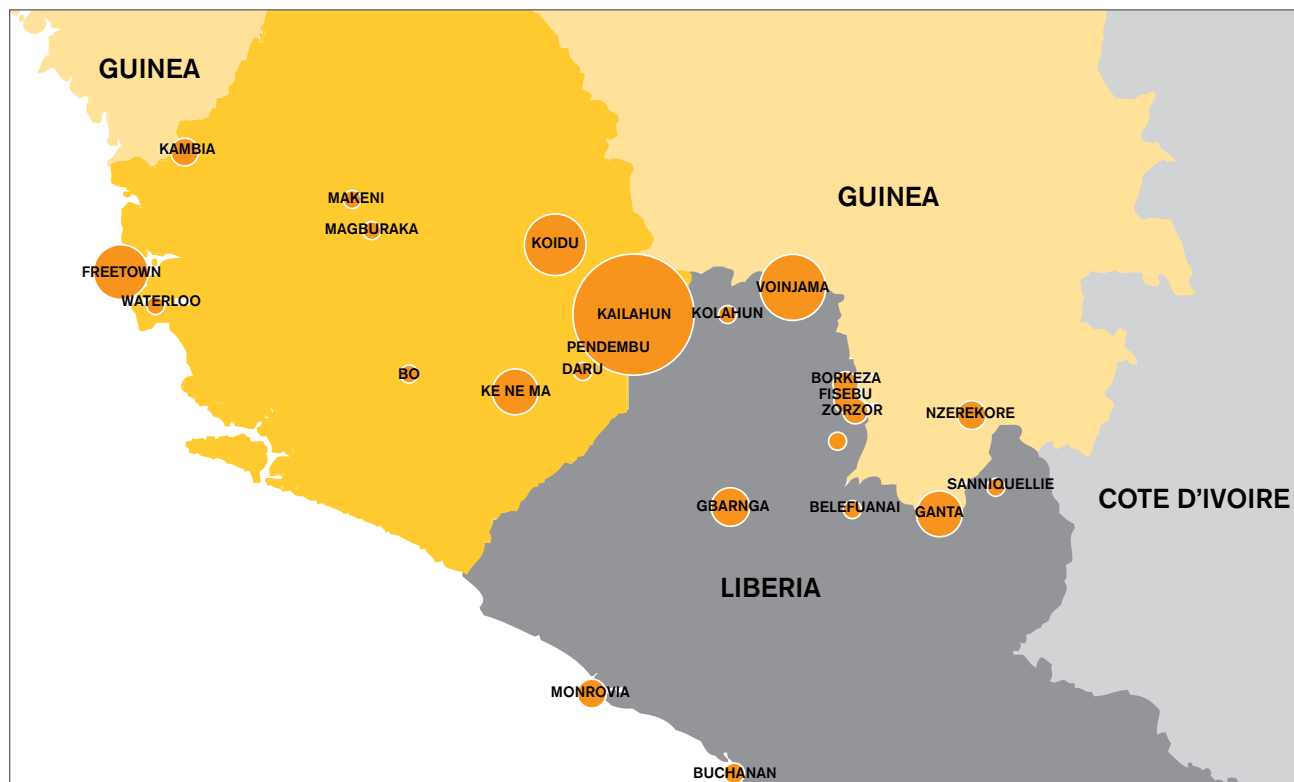
- Description of the research project and review of the Terms of Reference [TOR]
- History of the IRC Education Program in Guinea
- Discussion of what is Qualitative Research
- Ethics in research and informed consent (see Appendix 2)
- Our research strategy: tracing (review of Guinea payroll records)
- Our research strategy: semi-structured interviews (stories and statistics)
- Review of the interview protocol: Are we asking the right questions?
- Interview role plays and communal critique
- Operations: how will we cooperate to collect the data?
- Administrative issues: pay, logistics, photocopies
- Timeline of activities

We discussed in detail the sampling strategy and the need to reach a wide range of respondents, emphasizing the need to include former classroom assistants as well as former teachers, women as well as men, and the unemployed as well the employed. We talked about strategies for following tenuous leads and where to inquire about former IRC teachers in various settings. We agreed to target small villages as well as large towns.

Deploying the Research Team

After the orientation and training, we stayed together in the same location for a few days and went out in teams to trace and do interviews. We gathered at the beginning of each day to strategize and at the end of each day to debrief. Then the team deployed to the field sites. Collecting data required flexibility, because the whereabouts of potential participants were uncertain. In Sierra Leone, research assistants were deployed to Kailahun, Kono, and Kambia. We collected data from those locations as well as Freetown, Kenema, and Bo. In Liberia, research assistants were deployed to Ganta and Voinjama, and ended up covering Monrovia, Gbarnga, Zorzor, and Kolahun.

Figure 1: Map of interview locations



Sources: ESRI Data and Maps 2008, ESRI, Inc., 380 New York St., Redlands, CA 92373 (www.esri.com); FEWS-NET (Famine Early Warning System Network), Africa Data Dissemination Network, <http://earlywarning.usgs.gov/adds/index.php>, Sponsoring Agencies: USAID, USGS; original research data from Dr. Susan Shepler, organized and spatially correlated by Alan Ford.

Note: the sizes of the circles correspond to the number of respondents

The highest concentrations of respondents were in Kailahun District in Sierra Leone and in Lofa County in Liberia. Research assistants working in these areas easily found many subjects to interview. Outside these areas, team members had more difficulties and had to travel farther to reach participants. As the lead researcher, I traveled to each of the main locations to work alongside the research assistant for a short period and help strategize the subsequent steps in tracing. This allowed me to fine-tune the research assistants' techniques and obtain a wider range of experience by conducting interviews in different settings. In total, I conducted seventy-seven interviews across all of the districts of Sierra Leone and counties of Liberia covered in the research.

Qualitative Research and Semi-structured Interviews

Once we traced the former IRC teachers, we began to formulate a plan for gathering qualitative data from them. Based on the TOR for the research, we sought to answer the questions outlined in the Study Objective.

- What factors in repatriated refugee teachers lives influence their decisions to continue teaching?
- Do repatriated refugee teachers take on educational leadership roles within their school or community? What factors influence this decision?
- In what ways other than teaching are repatriated refugee teachers involved in the education field?
- Are repatriated refugee teachers who have not remained in education involved in developing their communities in other ways? If so, what are they?
- How does gender affect the roles of repatriated refugee teachers?

Using this, I determined that we would administer semi-structured interviews, which provide ample opportunity for respondents to tell their stories in their own words and allow the interviewer to gather relevant demographic information and insights into teachers' own understanding of their experiences.

I used the questions in the TOR as the basis for drafting an interview protocol, which I then tested in Guinea. Based on that experience, I made changes and redrafted the interview protocol with the Sierra Leone team during their orientation. We determined which open-ended questions would best elicit responses that address the research hypothesis. We followed a similar process to redraft the interview protocol with the Liberia team. The protocol did not directly ask the questions outlined in the TOR because they were too abstract. Instead, we asked questions about participants' personal experiences and then drew conclusions about their responses in the data analysis. (See Appendix 3 for the final interview protocol.)

Debriefing and Data Analysis

Following several months of data collection, the team regrouped in Kenema, Sierra Leone, for debriefing and data analysis. After sharing our stories from the field, we began to formulate themes that emerged from the interviews. I developed a coding framework to summarize demographic facts from the interviews, and for the first few days we read and coded the interviews. (See Appendix 4 for the coding framework.)

The data analysis required extensive discussion on how to evaluate the answers to the questions in the TOR. We did not seek one right answer but rather a range of answers, depending on various influencing factors. The themes we developed for coding included the conditions of service for teachers, problems faced at the government level, problems faced at the local level, other ways of using the trainings, and gender. (David Mackieue, our gender expert, led this discussion.) We also gathered interesting stories related to the questions “why teach?” and “why NOT teach?” Finally, each team member drafted a story of an individual of their choice; some of these appear in the Findings section of this report. Bidemi Carrol, the LEGACY project director, joined us for part of the exercise and added her own perspectives and guidance.

Figure 2: The research team at the debriefing and data analysis session in Kenema.



Left to Right: Susan Shepler, Wusu Kargbo, Sia Mani, David Mackieue, Nathaniel Boakai, Fertiku Harris. *Not pictured:* Pauline Gborlawoe.

Limitations of the Research

Our methodology faced certain challenges that resulted in some limitations to our study. Our snowball sampling strategy was successful overall, but we encountered obstacles. For one, I started out with limited documentation on the identification and whereabouts of the target population. We often had to follow difficult and tenuous leads, and some were not fruitful. Distributing leads to the appropriate research assistant also became very time consuming.

Additionally, since our tracer study methodology uses non-probabilistic sampling, our findings are not representative of the whole population. Our findings provide data for the participants we managed to trace and interview, but they do not wholly capture information about all of the former IRC teachers.

Our limited timeline restricted our ability to follow all the leads, and the team had to prioritize certain regions, which led to the systematic omission of potential participants. For example, we concentrated our tracing efforts in the areas we had identified where there was a high probability of finding former teachers, which excluded former teachers not in these locations. In Liberia, it is likely that we understudied Monrovia, because limited personal networks, tight timelines, and difficulties operating in an urban setting forced us to prioritize rural areas. Furthermore, we did not include the sixty-six former IRC teachers and staff whose names we had collected and who were resettled in the U.S., Europe, and Australia. Also, because we started the orientation and training in Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone assistants gathered data for a longer period. As a result, Sierra Leoneans are overrepresented in the sample. I attempted to correct for this in the quantitative analysis. However, this state of affairs is in some ways a corrective, since past studies of teachers' conditions of service consulted for this research have tended to focus more on Liberia than Sierra Leone (Shriberg 2007; Marphatia, et al., 2007).

V. Findings

The findings of the research weave together quantitative and qualitative data obtained in the responses to the questions posed in the TOR and elucidate themes that emerged from the research as described in the Debriefing and Data Analysis section.

As a reminder, the questions to be answered are:

What factors in repatriated refugee teachers lives influence their decisions to continue teaching? Do repatriated refugee teachers take on educational leadership roles within their school or community? If so or if not, what factors influence this? Besides teaching, how else are repatriated refugee teachers involved in the education field? Are repatriated refugee teachers who have not remained in education involved in developing their communities in other ways? If so, what are they? How does gender affect the roles of repatriated refugee teachers?

And the hypothesis to be investigated is:

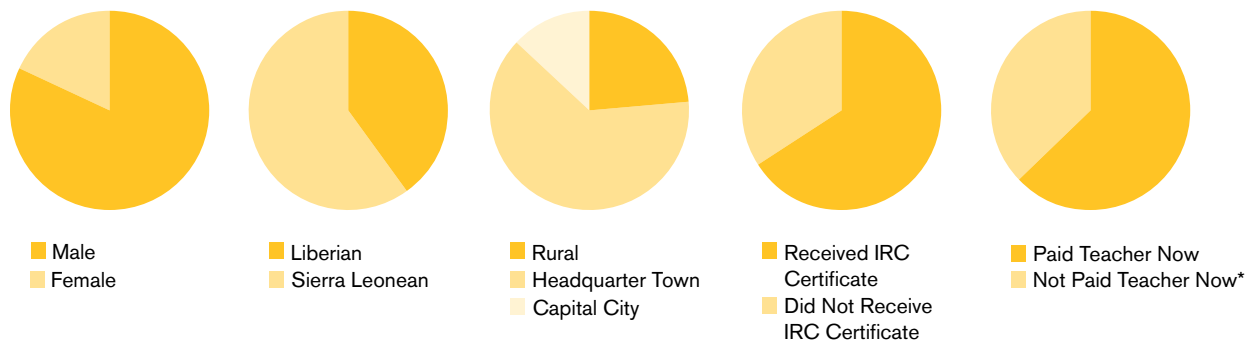
Refugee education in Guinea supports the development of a professional cadre of teachers and other educators, who can contribute meaningfully to the post-conflict reconstruction of education systems and the development of their communities on repatriation to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Description of the Sample

The first part of the findings describes the sample with respect to their responses to the following four questions as well as other demographic questions: Where are they now? What are they doing now? Are they working as teachers or not? Are they making use of the IRC trainings they received? The second part of the findings focuses on common career trajectories, the situations of individual former teachers, and their post-repatriation strategies.

As described in the Methodology section, our team interviewed 640 out of an estimated population of 2,000 to 4,000 former IRC teachers and classroom assistants. Figure 3 provides some of the key demographic data about the sample.

Figure 3: Key data about the study sample



* This figure includes volunteer teachers and those not working as teachers at all.

What factors in the lives of repatriated refugee teachers influence their decisions to continue teaching?

“Why did you decide to continue to teach?”

We asked the 63% of the sample now employed as teachers in their home countries why they decided to continue teaching, and we heard a range of responses. Some of them had been teachers before displacement and were continuing their careers where they had left off. Sixty-four percent of the sample reported that they had some experience working in a school, as a paid or volunteer teacher, before they went to Guinea, and 71% of those currently employed as teachers had some experience as a teacher before their displacement. The results are broken down into six categories, and a selection of responses is listed for each category.

1. Teaching is a good job.

Some expressed that teaching was good work, and that it was seen by both themselves and others as such:

- » “I am a born teacher. So it is my own profession. I love it very well.” (DM 149)⁶
- » “Teaching is a good job and a blessing job.” (DM 51)
- » “Blessing; here means that although the pay may be small, teachers get blessings from God for their good work.”
- » “My students praise me a lot for my good work.” (PG 66)

A former classroom assistant, now working as an elementary school teacher in Liberia said:

- » “I love children. I'm not shy and like to be with people. Moreover, teaching is an interesting job because it makes you to learn new things every day.” (PG 55)

Others expanded on the opportunity for learning and personal development inherent in the teaching profession:

- » “I want to broaden my knowledge and get more experience in life through reading.” (DM 41)
- » “Because it makes my livelihood better. Every day I come in contact with new ideas.” (WK 69)
- » “It's an honorable job. It makes me come in contact with many people, the president as well as fools.” (SM 67).

Others explained that teaching is an honorable profession:

- » “It is a good career, and I find it interesting. Moreover, I have an obligation to educate my fellow Sierra Leoneans.” (WK 56)
- » “I love to educate people, train people so that they can improve their lives to improve the communities. I have taught for 46 years. As people say, (the) Liberia war is attributed to ignorance, poverty and disease. And it is because people are not educated. So, I think if I contribute my quota to the country through education I will have done better to uplift the country.” (FH 17)

⁶ Throughout, the numbers that follow direct quotes refer to the tracking number of the interview. The letters are the initials of the interviewer and the number is the sequence in which the interviews were conducted. In this case, (DM 149) refers to the 149th interview conducted by David Mackieu, one of the research assistants.

2. I am a trained teacher. I want to put my training to good use.

Some had a more pragmatic explanation for their continuing work in the classroom:

- » "I don't want to sit idly. I want to put my knowledge and skills into use." (WK 73)
- » "Because I don't have the finances to go for further education now. Moreover, I am utilizing the knowledge I gained from IRC." (WK 88)
- » "I feel that it will be a waste of experience if I quit teaching. Besides, I have time with my home as a teacher." (SM 13)
- » "Because I have undergone the training. I can't quit the known for the unknown." (SM 27)
- » "It is my career. I inherited it from my father who was a teacher. I have been trained in it more than any other job so I am here until retirement age." (DM 39)
- » "Really, I didn't have interest first in teaching, but because of my training with IRC I chose to teach. So I still feel that I should continue here in Liberia." (FH 1).
- » "I was a teacher before the war, and I got more training in Guinea. So it didn't make sense to do a new thing." (SS 62)

Some felt that they need to use their subject-specific training:

- » "Because French teachers were in great demand." (WK 58)
- » "I am a biology teacher. The reason why I decided to continue is that there is a shortage of science teachers in the school system in Liberia." (PG 8)

3. Teaching is a duty. It is needed for the future of the country.

Some expressed a sense of duty or obligation towards their institutions, communities, countries, or to the younger generation.

- » "I look at it as a religious duty." (NB68)
- » "To train children to build a better Sierra Leone." (DM 49)
- » "I decided to teach because I know someone taught me. And that I don't want to depend on foreigners to teach my children. For those that taught me, most of them have died, so I need to be able to replace them to continue to teach my country." (FH 53)
- » "Because there is a shortage of trained teachers in Liberia now, if everyone sits down, who will teach our children?" (FH 20)
- » "Because I want to help the many many children, the future leaders, I will rescue them from ignorance, destruction and poverty." (NB 45)
- » "Because I feel that helping our children will help in the reconstruction of our country, Liberia." (NB 38)
- » "Because I want to further my education and also develop my children's education. Also to help the community and the country at large." (WK 80)
- » "There are a lot of inexperienced teachers in the teaching system today so I decided to help mold the minds of our youths using the experience from IRC." (PG 48)
- » "Because learning brings about development within a country. And people can only learn when there is a teacher to teach. So I decided to be one of the teachers." (FH 3)

“Son of the Soil”

Mohamed Koromais the Vice Principal of the secondary school in his hometown. He always knew he wanted to be a teacher. He completed the Higher Teachers Certificate (HTC) in 1991 and worked as a lab assistant in the school for two years before the war. In Guinea, he was in great demand as a qualified math teacher. He said he liked the IRC system of education, impressed that they were able to cater to both Liberians and Sierra Leoneans. He also liked that they were monitored regularly and that someone always looked at his lesson notes.

When he returned to Sierra Leone in 2000, he found that the school in his hometown had been destroyed. The former students of the school rented a place for the school to carry on in Freetown, and he signed up to teach. The government saw that rehabilitating the school was important to aid repatriation to the area, so they insisted that the school move back to its original site. The teachers who weren't from his hometown remained in Freetown, but Mohamed and other natives saw the need and returned to rebuild the school.

Mohamed is currently involved in administration at the school, and he sits on several development-related committees in the community. He also teaches for the Distance Education Program that is run out of Freetown Teacher's College. He is pleased with his experience with IRC in Guinea and said, "They trained me to be a good teacher and a good role model."

4. Teaching is a stepping-stone. I am waiting for something better.

Some expressed that they felt that teaching is often a first job for recent college graduates and is considered a phase that most professionals pass through.

- » "I want to accumulate income to go for a further course." (SM 56)
- » "I want to use the teaching as a stepping-stone to higher heights." (SM 47)
- » "There is no option. Teaching is a sort of waiting room." (SM 62)

5. I have no other option.

Many respondents explained that they felt teaching was the only job available to them, or certainly the easiest to get.

- » "Because the only available job now is teaching. So I have no option. Besides teaching the only other side is to join the (armed) force and I don't want to hold weapon I want to continue to live and die as a civilian so I had better teach." (DM 4)

Others indicated that they were nearing retirement age:

- » "I feel that I have been too long in the teaching field, over thirty years now. So I don't think I should start something else in which I have no experience." (SM 2)
- » "I have been a teacher all throughout my life so I will continue to be a teacher." (DM 107)
- » "I wanted to reach my pension age." (WK 57)
- » "Because I am unable to do any physical work now due to poor health and old age." (PG 12)

Some said that other jobs were only gained through nepotism, and that teaching work was easier to get. (There will be more on this theme below).

- » "I have no option. I don't have family in the NGO office to help me get a job." (SM 55)
- » "Well I have no option. In Sierra Leone it is who knows you that link you to get jobs." (SM51)

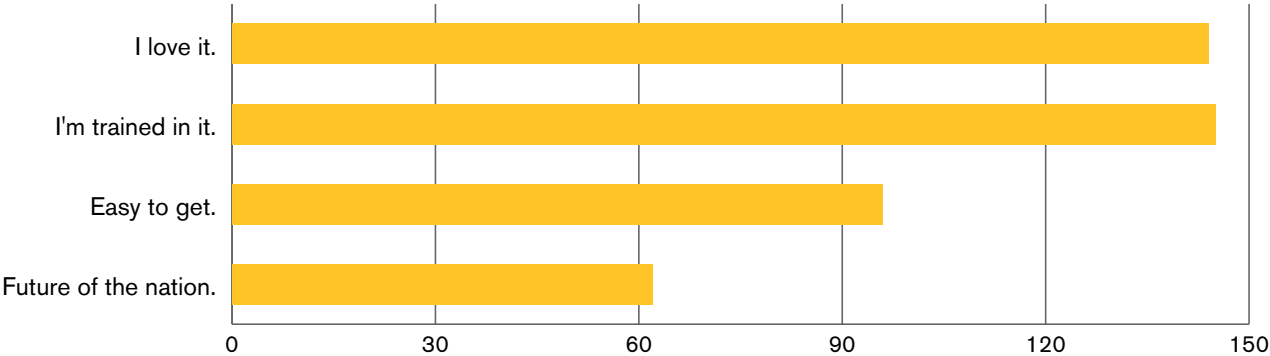
6. Gender related responses.

A few women cited the flexibility of the teaching job as a motivating factor, finding that they could spend more time with their families as a teacher than they could in other jobs.

- » “I feel that it will be a waste of experience if I quit teaching. Besides, I have time with my home as a teacher.” (SM 13)
- » “There is no other job for me now as a woman.” (DM 65)

To summarize these responses, we coded the answers to the question “why are you teaching?” according to the four most popular categories of response. Some people gave more than one answer. The results are shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Most common responses to the question “Why do you continue to teach?”



“What kind of work do you want to do in the future?”

In addition to asking teachers why they decided to continue teaching, we also asked about career goals (“What kind of work do you want to do in the future?”). Some of the older respondents laughed at the question and pointed at their white hair. The responses are presented in Table 3, according to whether they are currently teaching and not currently teaching. This table shows that generally, those who are teaching want to be teaching. Those who are not teaching, for the most part, want to be doing something else.

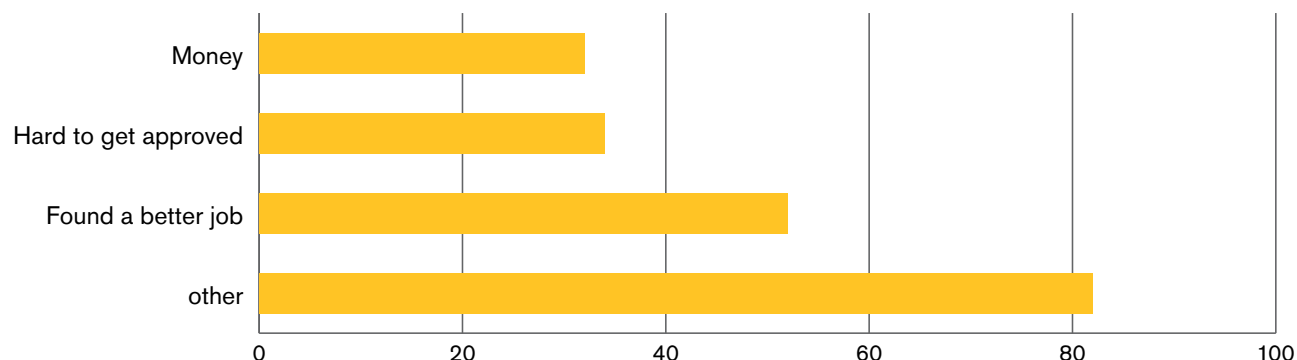
Table 3: Career goals by current employment

	Teaching	NGO Work	Other
Currently Teaching	79%	2%	18%
Not Currently Teaching	34%	14%	52%

“Why do you not teach?”

We asked the 37% of the sample not currently teaching why they had left the teaching field. Figure 5 below shows the results among non-teachers, coded for the most common responses. Again, some respondents gave more than one answer.

Figure 5: Most common responses to the question “Why do you not teach?”



Although the general perception is that people choose not to teach because of the low or irregular salary, that was surprisingly rarely cited among our respondents.⁷ “Found a better job” often meant they had found a job with better pay. “Hard to get approved” was an important issue, pointing to the fact that there were people who wanted to teach and who were trained to teach but who could not get on to the government payroll. (See the results under “career goals” for the 34% of those not working as teachers who nevertheless claim that their career goal is teaching.)

After reviewing the interview transcripts, the research team selected responses to the question “Why do you not teach?” that they found interesting and/or were not represented in the coding categories. The results are broken down into eight categories, and a selection of responses is listed for each category.

1. I got a better job.

Many left the teaching field for what they considered to be a better job, often with an NGO. Forty of the respondents are currently working for the IRC in Sierra Leone or Liberia.

- » “I didn’t really decide to leave teaching. But it is because of promotion. My job responsibilities cannot allow me to be in the classroom.” (FH 2)
- » From a man now working as Education Project Coordinator for a mission: “I wanted to be grateful to New Apostolic Church.” (WK 101)
- » From another man working as Education Secretary for a mission: “My authorities felt I should leave the classroom to come and fill this position as education secretary.” (WK 94)
- » “I left teaching because my contract ended as a teacher, and later got a job with Save the Children in Liberia. I was serving as community development facilitator.” (NB 27)
- » “I was promoted as peace education officer, so I decided to leave for the position offered me by IRC.” (NB 36)
- » “Because the NGO job I am doing is attractive. In the classroom there is no motorbike, no computer. So I feel it’s better as an NGO worker.” (SM 16)

⁷ See DFID and World Bank reports on teacher motivation. See reports by Shriberg (2007) for more on the conditions of service for Liberian teachers.

2. I am still working in education, training teachers.

Several respondents explained that although they were not classroom teachers, they still felt they were contributing to the education field or using their teaching skills with a different student population. Many of these commented that when their NGO jobs dried up, they were likely to return to the classroom themselves.

- » “I didn’t just leave the teaching per se, but because I have the knowledge to train teachers and the same IRC gave me the opportunity to exercise that knowledge in the field.” (FH 31)
- » “I have not directly left the teaching, but I am doing in different perspective. I am a trainer of teachers, and so I give a great deal of knowledge to help the teachers teach their classes.” (FH 11)
- » “I don’t want to continue teaching, but I want to continue supporting education. In fact, I am even thinking of starting my own school near here in a community with no school.” (SS 26)

3. I wanted something new.

Some merely wanted a different career with different challenges:

- » “Every human being wants to grow. Because of the opportunity I got I decided to leave teaching.” (WK 36)
- » “I wanted to change my lifestyle. I didn’t want one program throughout my life.” (SS 34)
- » “I wanted to try my hand at other things since I have already taught for ten years.” (WK 46)

4. I’m too old now.

Others were simply ready to retire:

- » “Because of physical disability. My hands tremble a lot when I attempt to write.” (FH 55)
- » “Because of my age, I won’t be effective any more. ‘I only talk with my pen now.’ ” (SS 44)
- » “Because I can’t see properly.” (WK 60)

5. The pay is low and irregular.

The issue of conditions of service for teachers is a big one in both Sierra Leone and Liberia. The first element of this is pay. There is a common joke that teachers are not paid in this world; instead, they will be paid in the next. I would argue that low and infrequent pay is a universally acknowledged aspect of the teaching profession in West Africa, and it is not surprising that this item came up repeatedly.

Research Assistant Nathaniel Boakai explained to us that when he interviewed an older man about why he had left teaching, the man became somewhat belligerent, saying, “You boy, what benefit will you get from it?” (NB 5) Other responses were:

- » “If you remain in teaching, you will die poor.”⁸ (NB 29)
- » “Because the government does not pay teachers well. And private schools are not willing to take too many teachers.” (PG 16)
- » “When I first came I worked as a teacher for a year. It was difficult to get salary. An NGO job pays on time.” (SS 37)
- » “The income is very small and the cost of living was high.” (WK 74)
- » “Salary and other facilities were not encouraging.” (WK 48)

8 Shriberg (2007) points to the same conventional wisdom, even using the same phrase as a heading in her report.

- » "The stipend was small. GTZ (German Development Agency) advertised their position and I got the job. That's how I quit teaching." (WK 47)
- » "Everyone looks for greener pastures. Teacher money is very small." (SS, number unknown)
- » "The conditions between the Sierra Leone government and IRC are quite different. With Sierra Leone government you may be employed but won't receive salary for over six months." (WK 18)

6. The education system is of low quality and corrupt.

Everyone knows that teacher pay is small, but for several people it was the corruption in the education system that led them away from teaching. Indeed, it surprised me that when talking to respondents about the differences between the IRC Guinea education system and the education systems in their home countries, they often cited the lack of supervision in the Sierra Leonean and Liberian schools. The message seems to be that they want someone to check on them and look at their lesson plans and so on. They indicated that it feels good to know that someone cares whether you are doing a good job in the classroom or not.

- » "I left the teaching due to the status of the school: no staffing at all and no care from even our bosses." (FH 21)
- » "Because the standard of education in Liberian schools has reduced considerably. The Liberia educational system is completely commercialized where teachers receive bribes from students. With me, I have never received such. And so I decided to leave teaching." (FH 9)
- » "I left the classroom because of very low salary and the corrupt practices of school administrators." (PG 40)

7. It is hard to get on the payroll – government level factors.

For Sierra Leoneans especially, the fact that their Ministry of Education did not recognize their training in Guinea kept them from getting on the government payroll.

- » "Well, on my arrival I did not even apply because I knew the Sierra Leone government would not consider me." (SM 86)
- » "Because the schools can only employ people based on your certificate, but IRC did not give me a certificate with all the teaching I did." (PG 38)
- » "Well, in Sierra Leone we the IRC teachers are not recognized. They even call us refugee teachers that are not qualified." (SM 8)
- » "Because the Sierra Leonean government claimed that we were late to come back and report at the Ministry of Education for verification, and so our names were deleted. I tried to fill in another form, but for two years I was teaching and I was not approved. So I was obliged to leave the teaching field to do mining so as to enable me to meet my family responsibility." (SM 78)
- » "They say we are untrained and unqualified teachers. We never got paid, so I decided to quit." (WK 79)
- » "When I came from Guinea, I met my former colleague teachers who had taught for over two years but were not approved on pay roll, so I felt discouraged and looked for another job instead of teaching." (DM 44)
- » "The recruitment process is very difficult in Sierra Leone so I was discouraged." (DM 15)
- » "Because I have tried to enter the teaching field here but no way for me. With all the IRC papers I still find it hard get a teaching job so I gave it up finally." (DM 23)
- » "The certificate I got in Guinea was not recognized by the Ministry of Education so I decided to come and study." (WK 11)

A school principal gave his perspective on the situation:

- » “The problem is not lack of qualified teachers. We have about ten teachers here who haven’t been approved by the Ministry (of Education) yet, so they are volunteers and I pay them out of school funds. *All* the teacher approvals have to happen in Freetown. It’s been two years and some are still waiting.” (SS-41)

8. Hard to get on the payroll – local level factors

In Liberia, although MoE policy is to accept the IRC Guinea-issued B certificate as equivalent to the C certificate earned in Liberia, people still complained of problems getting on the payroll at the local level.

- » “I did not leave the teaching field. I applied as a teacher in the present organization, but due to tribal background I find myself to be a weighing clerk.” (PG 22)
- » “The time I came here, it was difficult for the Liberian government to provide job openings/employment. The next thing was that those we met here were not trained, and so there was an envy/animosity amongst us. I tried teaching but it was just hard to continue.” (FH 8)
- » “I came back in 2006 because they asked us to come and home and help our country through teaching. I made it possible for the return opening of the Kolahun Central High School. I initiated many other means to bring up the school, but there was no means to pay teachers. So it was decided that the parents should contribute a little to help the teachers, but the DEO (District Education Officer) went against it. So I decided to seek another job with MSF (Medecins Sans Frontieres), but the DEO wrote against me saying I was trained by the ministry so I was compelled to teach. Now, I stay, but I am not on payroll up to now, as we speak I am not on payroll. How do I survive here? The government incentive recently, I did not receive. This has happened for three years now (2006–2009). The DEO is saying that the training received from Guinea is not equivalent to the teacher training here in Liberia, so through that he takes advantage of us.” (NB 70)

An IRC Teacher’s Encounter with Liberian Local Officials

I am a Liberian by nationality, a twenty eight year old woman. I come from the ____ District, and I am one of the trained IRC teachers in Guinea. I came back to my home in Liberia in 2006.

Upon my arrival in May, I reported to the IRC office in _____ and was onward referred to the District Education Officer (DEO) for employment. Immediately after that I was assigned to teach in ____ Public School at the Junior High Level to do social studies. I taught as a volunteer teacher throughout 2006 up until March 2009, when I received my first Ministry of Education (MoE) salary check.

From the onset of my employment up till March 2009, it has been very difficult for me to get on the government payroll.

Sometime in 2007, I was invited through the DEO to attend a training workshop in ____ for a week. During this time, MoE checks were ready, and so the various pay masters went out in the field to pay. I and my friend happened to lodge in the same house with the paymaster and the DEO. The pay master took three days to distribute the salary checks to teachers and other civil servants who were on payroll. At the end, there was a balance of forty checks that didn’t have owners (“ghost checks”). The pay master reported all of the leftover checks to the DEO and asked him what they would do. After some discussions, they (DEO and paymaster) called my friend and me and asked us to use various signatures to sign those ghost checks. This was a shock, for over the past years we have not received payment. Why these many left over checks? Well, we, without further comment, patiently sat and signed up the checks as they wished.

After the signing, the paymaster asked the DEO, “Are these your teachers?” He answered, “Yes.” Further the paymaster continued, “Why have you not placed them on some of these ghost checks or directly on payroll?” “Okay,” he continued, “I (paymaster) will try to put them on the payroll. So, girls, don’t worry.”

Immediately after that month, our names were placed on the payroll. (I came to know late in May 2007.) When I asked the DEO whether I could receive my salary check as promised by the paymaster, he told me that was only possible upon the completion of his house. And so it happened. I only started to receive my salary check in March 2009.

By Fertiku Harris.

Liberia vs. Sierra Leone: Did different government policies produce different outcomes?

Table 4 below shows that the population of Liberian teachers was less well trained than the population of Sierra Leonean teachers employed by the IRC in Guinea. It shows that similar percentages received the B certificate. (The gap is perhaps entirely explained by the fact that some Sierra Leoneans already had equivalent or higher certificates or that they suspected the B certificate would not be accepted in by the MoE in Sierra Leone.) Most interesting is the fact that, even with a supposedly easier route to formal employment, a smaller percentage of Liberian former IRC teachers are currently working as teachers compared with Sierra Leoneans.

Table 4: Sample of Training levels of teachers employed by the IRC in Guinea

Country of Origin	No Training Before	Received B Cert	Teaching Now
Liberia	68%	69%	52%
Sierra Leone	59%	64%	68%

We discovered that in Liberia, though in theory the IRC training was accepted as equivalent to Liberian training, in practice, some former IRC teachers found it difficult to get on the government payroll. Often it was easier to find employment in one of the many private schools that were popping up all over Liberia. In Sierra Leone, on the other hand, in theory the IRC training was not accepted by the government, yet in practice some people found their B certificate to be quite useful. Some described using it to find jobs in private schools or community schools. In the remote areas of Kailahun, where in some schools a majority of the teachers went through the IRC training, it was reported that principals and headmasters were quite anxious to hire former IRC teachers, even if they knew it would be difficult to get them on the rolls. Others reported that their IRC certificate helped them get accepted into further training courses (e.g., the Teachers Certificate (TC) offered through Distance Education at Eastern Polytechnic).

Table 5 below shows that in Liberia there are greater barriers to being employed as a teacher, despite the government's acceptance of the IRC trainings. I calculated the number of non-teachers for each country and then looked at the number of those who said their career goal was to teach. The percentage of non-teachers whose career goal is to teach can be considered a measure of the difficulty of getting a teaching job.

Table 5: Percentage of non-teachers whose career goal is teaching

Country of Origin	Number of Non-teachers	Number of Non-teachers Whose Career Goal Is Teaching	Percentage of Non--teachers Whose Career Goal Is Teaching
Liberia	112	48	43%
Sierra Leone	124	32	26%

There are several interesting issues here for further research. First is the importance of centralized control. It is our sense that in Liberia there are many more private schools (what might be called community schools in Sierra Leone). There is, therefore, more decentralized hiring, and, we were told, less quality control in the schools. On the other hand, in Sierra Leone even mission schools are under the control of the MoE. There are many more centralized hiring decisions (which leads to years waiting to get on the payroll), but one could argue that there is therefore much more quality control. Of course, some of this difference is explained by the fact that Sierra Leone is more years post-conflict than Liberia is, and, as a consequence, the country has had time to rebuild its education bureaucracy.

Significantly more Sierra Leoneans than Liberians pursued further training after returning home (see Table 6). This trend may be explained by the fact that the Liberian MoE accepted the IRC Guinea B certificate, while the Sierra Leonean MoE did not. Many young teachers felt obliged to repeat the material they had already learned in order to get the right accreditation. Some we talked with found this frustrating, but most took it in stride due to the ease of studying with the Distance Education Program in Sierra Leone. The vast majority reported that the IRC trainings made their further training easier. Many had even kept their notes from the trainings in Guinea and used them to study for their new courses.

Table 6: Numbers of respondents completing further teacher training after repatriation

Country of Origin	BA Degree	Secondary	Primary	Total
Liberia	1 (BA)	2 (B Cert.)	8 (C Cert.)	11
Sierra Leone	19 (BA, B.Ed., B.Sc.)	18 (HTC)	67 (TC)	104
Total	20	20	75	115

Rural and Urban

Location is another consideration in the responses to the question “Why do you not teach?” Some responses to “Why do you not teach?” were as follows:

- “(My employers) sent me to the bush too much and I didn't have a chance to learn.” (SS 52)
- “The ministry told us we had to go to the interior and I want to be in Monrovia to further my education.” (SS 67)

These responses echo what a recent World Bank report on education in Sierra Leone reports: “(M)any teachers who graduate from institutions in the capital and district headquarter towns do not return to their home areas to take employment. As a consequence, rural areas are deprived of trained and qualified teachers” (Wang 2007: 75). However, our larger results seem to contradict the idea that teachers do not want to work in rural areas. Table 7 breaks down responses based on where respondents are living now.

Table 7: Sample results disaggregated by current location

Location	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total	No Prior Training	Received B Cert	Teaching Now
Rural	152	24%	65%	68%	72%
Town*	408	64%	63%	65%	65%
City	80	13%	65%	59%	33%
Total	640	100%	63%	66%	63%

* We coded as “town” any place that was not a small village and not the capital city. Therefore, there is a wide range of variation in this category.

Notice that respondents in all three types of locations were all equally untrained before displacement, but after repatriation we see a different story. Although we cannot make a causal argument, those who are living in the rural areas now are more likely to teach. Perhaps those who want to teach are more likely to move to the rural areas, where teaching jobs are easier to get. Conversely, those in the city are less likely to teach. Perhaps those who come to the city do so for other reasons, to find other types of work, or to pursue further training.

The DFID report on teacher motivation in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia reports some similar findings. Responding to the common argument that working in rural schools is considerably more difficult and thus more demotivating than working in urban schools due mainly to poor living and working conditions, the authors argue:

(T)eachers who work at schools in their home areas tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction than their colleagues who are ‘strangers’ in the locality. This is because locally based teachers are more likely to have supportive extended family and social networks, be known to the community, and have higher levels of commitment to promoting education and development activities in the area. They are also likely to have access to land (Bennell and Akyeampong 2007: vii).

A number of our respondents were people who started out teaching in rural schools, fled to Guinea, taught there when they had the chance, then repatriated back home and continued teaching. Indeed, the motivations of rural teachers are different, often, from the motivations of urban teachers. The rural teachers we interviewed were usually in their home villages (or the village of a spouse). They expected to stay there, usually farming for a living, and to contribute to the development of their communities by teaching on the side. Urban teachers, on the other hand, were usually young and career minded, using teaching as a stepping-stone to something better.

Gender Analysis

One of the questions in the TOR refers to how gender affects the prospects for repatriated refugee teachers. We have seen evidence that gender can influence the decision to continue teaching or not. Here I delve deeper into the effects of gender on our sample.

Females made up 18% of the sample, which is roughly equal to their proportion of the teaching corps in Guinea (see the discussion of gender in the Methodology section). It is clear from Table 8 that the women in the sample had less training before their employment with the IRC in Guinea, fewer of them went on to receive the B certificate, and fewer are now working as teachers compared with the men. This differential may be explained by the fact that twenty-one of the 114 total females in the sample are classroom assistants.

Table 8: Sample results disaggregated by gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total	No Prior Training	Received B Cert	Teaching Now
Male	526	82%	62%	67%	64%
Female	114	18%	72%	63%	54%
Total	640	100%	63%	66%	63%

Results for Classroom Assistants

There were twenty-one classroom assistants in our sample, which is not enough to draw any serious conclusions about outcomes for this population. However, of those twenty-one, only one had any teacher training before she came to Guinea, ten received the B (or C) certificate from the IRC in Guinea, none pursued any further teacher training after their return, and only seven are now employed as teachers.

Table 9 shows the results if we remove the classroom assistants from the sample (that is, calculate the same percentages for women who were teachers but not classroom assistants):

Table 9: Sample results for classroom assistants and other females

	Number of Respondents	Percent of Females	No Prior Training	Received B Cert	Training Post-repatriation	Teaching Now
Classroom Assistants	21	18	95%	48%	0%	33%
Not Classroom Assistants	93	82	68%	67%	22%	55%
Total Females	114	100	72%	63%	18%	54%
Sample Total	640	--	63%	66%	18%	63%

It is not surprising that the classroom assistants, who started out with a lower educational standard, are not currently teaching at the level of the general sample. It is interesting to note, however, that the female former IRC teachers who were not classroom assistants received more training after repatriation (22%) than the general sample (18%), although they had less training before displacement than the average (68% without teacher training compared with 63% in the total sample). Despite that fact, fewer of them (55%) are now working as teachers than the total sample (63%). This might mean that the IRC experience pushed them to pursue further education but that they are still experiencing greater barriers to employment in schools than their male counterparts.

Table 10 shows that females are less likely than average to be working as teachers now, but slightly more likely to be working for an NGO and more likely to be unemployed. It may be the case that some of those who report themselves to be unemployed are jobless by choice to stay home with their families.

Table 10: Current employment by job of females and total sample

	Teacher	Volunteer Teacher	Student	NGO Worker	Other	Unemployed
Female	54%	5%	5%	14%	4%	18%
Sample Total	63%	5%	5%	11%	5%	12%

On the qualitative side, our gender expert David Mackieu⁹ took on the task of coding the interview scripts for statements related to gender. What emerges is that sexual harassment related to getting and keeping a teaching job is a major issue. He highlights some statements of sexual harassment even among IRC staff but also some praise for the IRC for empowering women. (It is interesting that in these responses, sexual harassment seems to be understood primarily as a form of corruption rather than as a violation of women's rights.)

- “Yes, it is hard for some of us as women to get help because those in top offices in these days look for those they can sexually use when they want or give them lump sum of money or family relatives or else you don't get the job. It was my former IRC principal who helped me here, otherwise it would have been difficult. This is the position of most women after the war in Sierra Leone.” (DM 98)
- “Yes, I still want to learn but it is just that there is no one to help me as a woman. When you ask for a favour except you give up yourself for sex before one can help you. So it is not easy for me and my children to survive.” (DM 08)
- Regarding the functioning of the IRC program in Guinea, one said: “Another thing that was disturbing was the attitude of the coordinators/supervisors. A notorious one was (name removed) who had a girlfriend in almost every school. He demanded monies from teachers and had ghost teachers in almost all the schools. Later he was exposed and dismissed from the program.” (WK 45)
- “Yes, IRC work was very good for us women because had it been that things were rough so much that some of us would have ended up in commercial sex just to survive, but that did not happen; thank God, IRC came and helped us to work and earn.” (DM 54)
- “When I came, I suffered for food – up to now I don't have a house. I don't have money to pay my children's school fees. From 2007 up to now I have gained employment. Sometimes I feel like leaving the classroom because of these (issues), but when I think ‘who will stay and teach my children when nearly all of us, the (former) IRC teachers, are not on payroll?’ I can take courage and continue to teach. But things are not just easy. A mother with five children with no paid job to support her children – a difficult time.” (FH 51)
- “There was nobody to help me as a woman when we returned to Sierra Leone (SL). Help was only given to girlfriends and close family friends. For outsiders, only God can help us. Maybe in the future (I would return to the teaching field) – yes – if someone can help me freely without pre-condition of any sexual relationship or commission of salary which is the order of the day now in SL.” (DM 104)

Despite widespread sexual harassment, a few women made it clear how much the IRC training had meant to them at a difficult point in their lives:

- “My husband died in the war. I'm now a single parent. We even had trouble finding a place to stay. When I was working for the Unaccompanied Minors Project of IRC, I was also separated from my children, so the work helped me also to deal with my own stress. I saw others were going through the same thing. It gave me hope, a reason to live. They made me into a better person, a qualified woman.” (SS 76)
- “(The training) was challenging, because I did not know how to go about to teach or even stand before a group to talk. But IRC made me to be very bold.” (PG 2)

⁹ David is the founder of Men's Association for Gender Equality (MAGE), an organization started in the refugee camps in Guinea and now operating in Sierra Leone, headquartered in Kailahun. David's work was recognized by UNHCR, and he has traveled to South Africa at their behest to participate in a conference on men's advocacy for gender equality.

- “In my community we have an organization which I am chairing. In this organization I sometimes give awareness on GBV (gender-based violence) and even on HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). I also give awareness on GBV ad HIV/AIDS in my family.” (PG 2)

IRC teacher starts a women’s empowerment NGO in Guinea

Emily Sloboh was living in Yekepa, Nimba County, Liberia, in 1990. She was doing business and was a second-year accounting student. When the war came to Liberia, she fled to Guinea and was living in Lola in 1990 when some parents came together to organize a school. In those days she says even those without any teacher training could teach. (Those who were highly educated didn’t want the low salary.) She worked as a kindergarten teacher and treasurer for the PTA. Eventually she was promoted to headmistress of the lower elementary school. In addition to the teacher trainings provided by the IRC, she also took advantage of courses offered at the vocational school, studying tailoring and computers.

She explained: “My training helped me mobilize the women into a self-help club where we started with low-rate loans. Some girls were into the sex trade and didn’t know about STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and GBV. There was a lot of violence. The way IRC built my capacity, I counseled these women. I used the skills I received from IRC to talk to the women about the dignity of a woman. I called my fellow teachers to talk to the sex trade women. We started going from house to house to counsel them. They said, ‘Well, we’re not educated. It’s the only way we can survive.’ So I saw that if we taught them how to sew or bake they could improve their lives.”

Today’s Women International Network (TWIN) was founded in 2000, with Emily as the Executive Director (though she kept teaching with IRC until 2001). She started looking for donors for the vocational trainings and things grew from there. The network now employs several other former IRC teachers. In 2007 Emily Sloboh won the Voices of Courage award from the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children. (See more at the organization’s web site <http://www.twinspace.org/>).

Emily concluded, “I’m proud. From IRC I have decided to make use of what they taught me to create an organization that’s benefitting thousands today. Otherwise, I don’t know what I’d be today. A refugee saying, ‘If the UN doesn’t feed me, I won’t eat.’ I was just in South Africa for a women’s NGO meeting. I also went to Uganda for a reproductive health conference – all through IRC.”

In summary, gender is a very salient issue in the West African context. We heard several stories of the barriers that women face to employment and full participation in the reconstruction of their societies. Most troubling were the reports of ongoing sexual harassment in different areas of their lives, conveyed with a lack of surprise that it should be this way. Addressing gender discrimination in West Africa is a long-term project, and there is still a long way to go. Teacher training can only do so much to address the issue. Yet given the barriers that women face, it is hopeful to see the progress made. Women pursued further training at higher rates than men, and women spoke of learning how to stand up for themselves and be self-reliant. There was definitely empowerment and enthusiasm among the trainees, but still obvious barriers to success.

Do repatriated refugee teachers take on educational leadership roles within their school or community?

In Schools

We tried to get at the answers to this question by asking teachers, “Besides teaching, what other work do you do in the school?” People gave answers that ranged from working as principal or vice-principal to “I help organize the sports” or “I run the school garden.” Some had formal positions as head of peace clubs, health clubs, or other clubs funded by outside organizations. We coded any of these answers as a “leadership role in the school.” We found that 73% of teachers had some leadership role in their school and 27% reported that their only work at the school was teaching. Considering that this information is all self-reported, I suspect that people tended to exaggerate their leadership role (or that we tended to count too many activities as “leadership.”)

The most interesting question to me was whether IRC teachers could be agents of change in their schools. While in Guinea, they learned new student-centered learning techniques and other modern teaching and school management methods. How much could a handful of refugee teachers turn around the culture of a school mired in old ways of doing things? We heard a few examples of former IRC teachers who, following the model of the IRC teacher-training workshops, organized informal in-service trainings for their colleagues who were curious about the new teaching methods. Schriberg's study on the conditions of service for Liberian teachers asked a similar question, and it is worth reporting her results here. She concluded that "teachers trained in the education programs of camps for displaced persons (refugee and/or IDP (internally displaced peoples) have now returned and are working in Liberian schools are making an important contribution to education in postwar Liberia. Overall, 191 (46.6 %) of the teachers surveyed who are now working in IRC-supported schools had taught while they lived as refugees or IDPs. Of these, 79.7 % reported that they are sharing their knowledge, skills and training with their fellow teachers" (2007: 21).

These results are based on self-reporting by teachers in IRC-supported schools. There are obvious incentives for them to exaggerate the extent to which they have used the trainings. To really answer the question of whether a few teachers can bring about institutional change at the school level would require classroom observations and, I believe, some extended ethnographic research to document various school cultures.

In Other Organizations

I interpret education-related roles broadly to include providing community sensitization and mobilization, as well as training trainers and curriculum development. Many former IRC teachers in our sample have gone on to hold education-related positions, primarily for NGOs (especially for the IRC), but also for community-based organizations (CBOs), religious missions, and government. In our sample, thirty-two respondents now work for the IRC in education-related programs (LEGACY, CYCLE, LTTP). Four are working on gender-based violence with the IRC. Eleven are working in training for other NGOs (including the International Committee of the Red Cross, Concern Worldwide, the Danish Refugee Council, the GTZ, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Handicap International, and Ibis). Two started their own NGO. Four are working with NGOs on health-related (mostly HIV/AIDS) trainings and outreach. Two are education officers for missions, and two are education ministry employees.

In their communities

Several respondents told us they served in their local Community Teacher Association or Parent Teacher Association. In response to the question "How did you use your IRC training outside the classroom?" forty respondents said that they try to convince parents in their communities to send their children to school.

Other Career Trajectories

Those not involved in education, either as teachers, administrators, or NGO workers, were engaged in a range of different activities. Nineteen are working in administrative capacities for NGOs (including GTZ, International Medical Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council, among others). Ten are working for government or parastatals (including the ministry of mines, the anticorruption commission, the national statistics office, as a secretary at a teacher training college, and as a local court clerk). Three work in mining, four work for the police, five are in the health field (as nurses or pharmacists). Six described themselves as doing private business or trading (though people doing similar work might also call themselves "unemployed.") Two are working in photography, two are security guards, one drives a motorcycle taxi, and one is a weighing clerk at a rubber-buying station. Often respondents told us that they drew on some aspect of their IRC training to help them find their new jobs. For example, some started doing the health trainings in the camps and realized they had an interest in the health field. Some of those who received fellowships to study in Conakry used their training to find work back home.

A Success Story

My name is Abdul Kamara and I live in Bo town. I currently work as a computer engineer for various NGOs in the country. My goal is to raise funds and go to university to study administration.

I left Sierra Leone at an early age together with my parents and took refuge in Guinea in 1992. I attended one of the refugee schools sponsored by IRC in Guinea. Upon graduation, I was given a scholarship by IRC to read computer science in one of the vocational schools in Conakry. I successfully completed the program and was employed as a teacher by IRC in Guinea.

When I finally came back to Sierra Leone in 2002, I could not teach in any of the schools because I didn't have a Teacher Certification recognized by the Government of Sierra Leone. But within a short period, I recognized that I had valuable computer skills I could utilize to my advantage. I got my first job as a computer technician with an NGO in Bo, a job that paid me well. Within that period, other organizations came to know that I was good at my work.

My main concern at the moment, however, is my lack of experience in managing people in the work place. I have taken the WASSCE to go to college and read Administration and Management. I am grateful to IRC for making me what I am today – able to work and earn a living, and giving me the foundation for advanced studies.

By Wusu Kargbo

In addition to the employment data reported above, 5% of the sample are currently students in fields ranging from medicine to peace and conflict resolution to education, and 12% of the sample report themselves to be unemployed. In this context, unemployed likely means unemployed in a salaried job. Some of the respondents – mainly the classroom assistants – lack adequate training to be employed in a salaried job, and others are well trained but looking out for an employment opportunity.

Other development activities

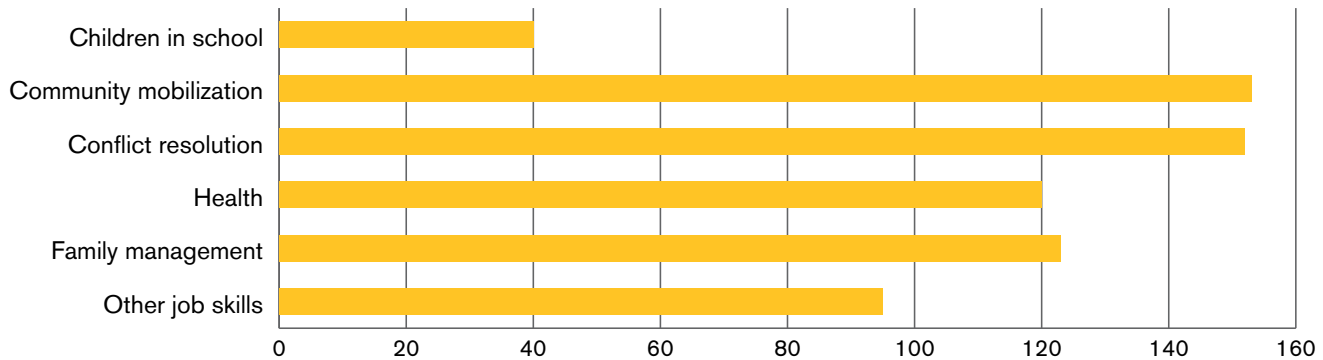
Are repatriated refugee teachers who have not remained in education involved in developing their communities in other ways?

We tried to answer this question by asking, "How are you working to develop your community?" Unfortunately, this interview question did not yield very useful results, since practically everyone could make the case that their work was helping to develop the community. Teachers saw teaching as development work, and NGO workers were confident their work also counted as development. Some of the unemployed were working to set up their own local youth empowerment organizations or were leading HIV/AIDS sensitization groups in their communities. Health workers, policemen, housewives, and businesspeople could all make the case that they were contributing to the development of their communities. Again, I believe it would take more than self-reporting to determine which members of the sample could really be seen as leaders in their communities.

Other Ways the Trainings Were Used Outside the Classroom

A more useful question was "How did you use the IRC trainings you received outside the classroom setting?" Figure 6 shows the results from our coding of the responses, which include more than one answer for some respondents.

Figure 6: Most common responses to the question “How did you use the training outside the classroom?”

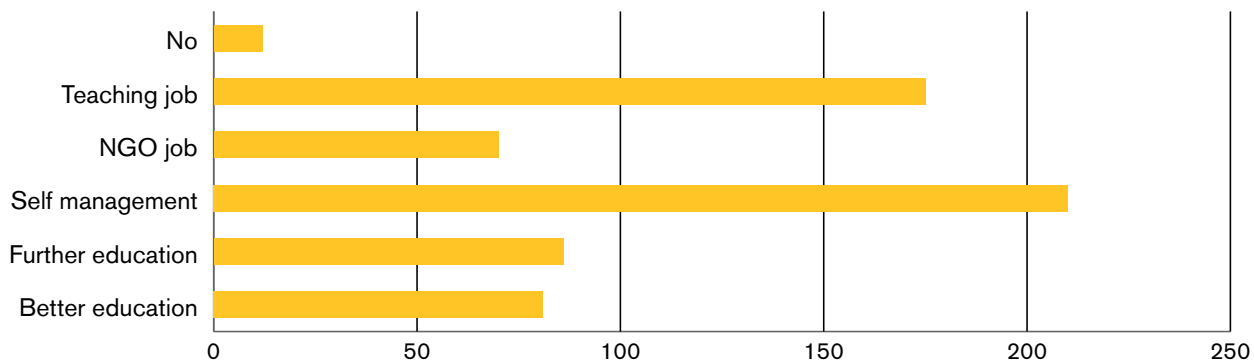


Though the conflict resolution workshop was held infrequently, many people cited it as very useful. They explained the ways they had resolved conflict both in the refugee setting and once they returned home. Some of the other trainings they might have found useful include more French language training, computer skills, and project proposal writing. Clearly, these are not teacher trainings, but the fact that the conflict resolution workshop had such an impact on the teachers indicates that other high-impact trainings with an educated audience might be useful. We asked those who pursued further education whether the IRC trainings had been useful in their new course, and almost all agreed that they had. Some of the women were particularly grateful for the trainings, saying that even more than the content, the way the workshops were organized – with equal participation for all – emboldened them to speak in a group, even among men and people older or better trained than themselves.

Reactions to IRC Trainings

We asked people what challenges they had faced on repatriation. Lack of shelter, lack of food, lack of employment, and resentment from those who stayed behind were the most common responses. Then we asked people whether the IRC training helped them upon repatriation. The responses are shown in Figure 7 below, and include more than one answer for some respondents.

Figure 7: Most common responses to the question “Did the training help you postrepatriation?”



The most obvious answer is “it helped me find a teaching job,” since most of the trainings and the certificates and attestations given to refugees were about their work as teachers. Some respondents said it helped them find an NGO job or that it helped them in their further education. Some of those who had been working as teachers before displacement, and had jobs ready for them when they returned, nevertheless said that the trainings had made them better teachers.

The most interesting response had to do with self-management and self-confidence. Here respondents talked about feeling that they had learned how to deal with their situation and that they were confident that they would come through all right. They learned ways to deal with others and saw themselves as trained professionals.

Indeed, when asked to reflect on the impact of their time with the IRC in Guinea on their lives today, there was a generally very positive reaction. In response to “Overall, how would you describe your experience working with IRC?” one school principal told us:

“Very, very good in the sense that they built me up from one step to another. They made me more qualified than the position I held in Liberia before the war. I must be very thankful to IRC for the training I received from them. I am presently occupying a position as principal of a high school that I do not have the degree for (BA/B.Sc.). Today, colleagues with B.Sc./BA are working under me, and through the training from IRC I am able to control them. IRC training brought me from mat to mattresses. When I was in Guinea, I was a palm wine tapper, but through IRC I was able to shine and today I am a real human. At the time, people were traumatized, in sin, and very disordered. But with IRC, I was able to deal with these numerous war affected people. I gained vast knowledge.” (FH 18)

Some respondents reported lingering complaints about not getting their final paychecks due to the events of 2000. Others complained that they hadn't been able to get employment with the IRC in their home country. (This is hardly surprising, since the programs in Sierra Leone and Liberia are much smaller than the Guinea program was at its height.) Most troubling, though, were those who reported difficulty getting their B certificates from the IRC. (See Appendix 5 for a list of those who asked us to inquire about their certificates.)

When we conducted the interviews, most respondents reported positive experiences with the IRC, but a few expressed bitterness. Some in Liberia incorrectly felt that the IRC had colluded with the Liberian government to trick them into returning early, promising teaching jobs that never materialized. (The IRC never promised employment opportunities. Repatriation was voluntary and organized by UNHCR.) At the other extreme, others felt so positively about the IRC system of education in Guinea that they implored the IRC to take over the education system of their home country.

VI. Conclusion

Summary of Findings

In previous reports evaluating the IRC's education program in Guinea, positive results were documented for students, but the positive effects for teachers and for the reconstruction of education systems in their countries of origin was always assumed and never demonstrated. The goal of this research was to go beyond the assumptions and document former teachers' own experiences and voices from the ground up, and in the process assess the long-term effects of the teacher trainings for refugee teachers in Guinea. The result was a complex tapestry of personal stories, which, when taken together, shed light on the struggles and triumphs of individuals as well as on some of the structural issues facing former refugees at the local, national, and international levels.

What can this research hope to tell us? It is not an evaluation of the IRC Guinea Program and it is not an assessment of the state of the post-war education systems of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Rather, using the experiences of former refugee teachers, we can reveal realities from their perspective. We can see how they have been able to use what they learned in Guinea and whether they have found a role in rebuilding the education systems of their home countries.

Recall the hypothesis:

Refugee education in Guinea supports the development of a professional cadre of teachers and other educators who can contribute meaningfully to the post-conflict reconstruction of education systems and to the development of their communities on repatriation to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The good news is that two-thirds of the former refugee teachers are employed as teachers, often at their old schools; 71% of currently employed teachers had some experience working in a school before displacement. Those who have stayed in the teaching field describe their love of the work, their desire to contribute to the development of their communities and nation, and sometimes simply a lack of other options. Some have found better paying work with NGOs or are working in other professions by choice. Overall, the people we interviewed appreciated the training they received from the IRC in Guinea, and they pointed to multiple ways in which they made use of the trainings after their repatriation. The bad news is that some have left the teaching field in disgust. They describe the low pay and poor conditions of service, and they complain about the difficulty of getting onto the teaching rolls, even with the right certification and even in the face of supposed teacher shortages.¹⁰

Gender

The good news is that women in our sample are pursuing further training at a rate higher than men, partly because they started out less well trained than men and partly because they felt empowered by the training they received by the IRC. Perhaps due to the hiring policies of NGOs, we found higher rates of women engaged by them. We also find a higher number of women describing themselves as unemployed, often choosing to work at home or as petty traders. The bad news is that they describe ongoing sexual harassment in the workplace, claiming that they are often expected to trade sex for employment. We found a lower percentage of women working as teachers than equally trained men, which may be in response to the systematic culture of sexual harassment.

Rural vs. Urban

The conventional wisdom is that trained teachers do not like to work in rural schools. We found, however, that in our sample people living in rural areas were more likely to be working as teachers than people in urban areas. Of

¹⁰ Nishimuko's 2007 study reports similar findings. In a country wide sample of classrooms in Sierra Leone, the majority of teachers had some teacher training and more than 80% had over five years of experience, yet 96% of teachers were dissatisfied with their salary.

course, this is partly explained by the fact that there are relatively few options for paid employment in rural areas. As discussed in the Findings section, there is great selection bias at work in our sample, so we cannot conclude much. However, it is clear that there is a population of teachers who are happily working in their remote villages and who expect to continue to do so for many years.

Liberia vs. Sierra Leone

Liberia's MoE agreed to employ teachers with IRC certification and Sierra Leone's MoE did not. One might expect, therefore, that a higher percentage of former IRC teachers would have found employment in postwar Liberia than in Sierra Leone. Contrary to expectations, our research found that teachers with IRC qualifications have found it more difficult to get hired in Liberia than in Sierra Leone. Since the war in Sierra Leone ended several years earlier than the war in Liberia,¹¹ that country has had more time to rebuild its shattered education system. Liberia is likely lagging behind in all its education rebuilding goals and simply cannot afford to hire too many new teachers. On the other hand, Sierra Leonean respondents were nevertheless able to make use of the IRC certification in various ways once they returned, including helping them to find employment as teachers.

Our findings make it clear that government-level policy is not sufficient to reintegrate former refugee teachers. If the state does not budget for hiring teachers, it will not matter whether they have certification or not. We also found that teachers still face challenges at the local level, regardless of national-level policy. This highlights the importance of the local level and the school level in understanding teachers' experiences. It is not enough to give people skills and expect them to be entrepreneurial and change the education system on their own. They need to be supported to work for change from within the system.

Key Conclusions

There is a pool of trained teachers who want to teach but are not teaching

Many trained teachers are not teaching.¹² Davidson Kuyateh of the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union told me that there are plenty of trained teachers in Sierra Leone, and that in 2009 *none* of the graduates of the teacher training colleges were brought on to the teaching rolls. Many students attend teacher-training colleges with no intention of working as teachers; they are simply looking for any tertiary training they can get. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2009, 40 to 50% of teachers actually teaching in schools are "untrained and unqualified." In sum, there are trained teachers not teaching and untrained teachers teaching.¹³ In that counter-intuitive situation, our research leaves us with the question of what the best way is to move ahead with rebuilding the education systems of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

11 President Kabbah declared peace in Sierra Leone in January 2002, though the country had hosted UN peacekeepers since November 1999. In Liberia, November 2004 saw a peace agreement between warring factions, and elections were held in 2005.

12 A recent World Bank report on education in Sierra Leone comes to the same conclusion. "Many graduates of teacher training institutions do not enter the teaching profession, and a significant number of those who do stay for less than four years. Many who exit the profession join the police force to train as officers or work for NGOs, which they believe offer better conditions of service." (Wang 2007: 75)

13 Davidson Kuyateh of the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (in a personal interview) said he believes part of the problem is that the heads of schools hire whom they want instead of to the most qualified person. This state of affairs also contributes to sexual harassment.

VII. Recommendations

I will start with an observation. The field of education in emergencies, which is understood to encompass education for refugees and internally displaced people as well as education for post-conflict reconstruction, is a dynamic policy arena. In the post-conflict setting in particular, many are not looking back at refugees but are looking forward to the Millennium Development Goals. My recommendations are for policy in refugee education, for engagement with post-conflict education reconstruction, and suggestions for further research.

Refugee Education Programs

As I said in the introduction, there are multiple evaluations of IRC Guinea's Education Program, and each of them made recommendations for improvement of the system. Many of those suggestions were implemented to the ultimate benefit of the program. What recommendations can be drawn from *this* study, with its focus on long-term effects instead of immediate needs?

First of all, it should be acknowledged that refugee issues are by their very nature transnational. It seems obvious that a sub-regional strategy is the right approach for creating durable solutions. This means first that the various IRC country teams should work across borders to ease refugee reintegration as much as possible. Of course, the IRC's policy is to work for durable solutions for refugees and their programs are set up to do so, and refugees may have unreasonable expectations of help. However, the incidence of stories by our respondents of promises made to them by IRC Guinea that were not kept by the IRC in Sierra Leone and Liberia lead us to conclude that more coordination between country offices is needed.

Eventual reintegration should be in the minds of policy makers from the beginning. In this case, it meant working with governments in the sending countries from the beginning to achieve test results and award certifications that would have meaning after the student or teacher returned home. It is true that the governments of sending countries are often weak or unstable. It must have been frustrating when IRC Guinea's carefully arranged agreement to have Liberian students sit their exams in Guinea came apart after the election of Charles Taylor as president. Nevertheless, there should be an effort to work towards refugees' eventual reintegration by collaborating with home institutions. This collaboration could take the form of travel support for MoE officials to visit refugee settings. The IRC began working on that for teachers near the end of their time in Guinea, and that is a lesson that should certainly be applied in other refugee settings.

I think it is important to investigate the possibility of cross-border certification for teachers in refugee situations, perhaps by moving towards a regional teacher-certification system. This falls in line with what Jackie Kirk (2009) recommended for students in *Certification Counts: recognizing the learning attainments of displaced and refugee students*. She concluded that the presence of a regional exams body, West African Examinations Council (WAEC), made for better results for students. A similar regional body for teacher certificates might be useful and could allow for international movement of trained teachers to meet immediate demand.

The trainings provided to teachers in Guinea were appropriate. Our respondents were quite pleased with the training they received and felt almost unanimously that it made them better teachers. Training in how to teach was vital and useful. Our findings indicate that the other trainings were useful to them as well (health, gender based violence prevention, peace and conflict resolution, etc.) School administration was also helpful to those who went back to reconstruct destroyed schools or started their own schools.

Post-conflict Education Reconstruction

The first and most obvious recommendation for post-conflict education reconstruction is to utilize the former IRC teachers as effective local partners for numerous projects. It makes sense to keep in touch with them. Find ways to continue to engage teachers who were trained in the past, by supporting the informal in-service workshops that are already taking place in some schools.

I concluded that there was not a shortage of trained teachers in Sierra Leone or Liberia, though there is a shortage of trained teachers in classrooms. This suggests that training more teachers alone is not the answer. One high level

respondent put it this way: "Training more teachers is like pouring water into a bucket with holes in it." More emphasis should be placed on teacher *retention* existing teacher training initiatives. It probably makes more sense to lobby for trained teachers who want to work than to train new teachers. The best approach is to work with teachers who are already working in schools, especially in rural areas, by conducting in-service trainings and continuing Distance Education Programs.¹⁴

With respect to gender, sexual harassment is a society wide issue in West Africa, bigger than just the education system. Addressing and ameliorating issues of gender inequity requires deep, structural changes in society, transforming not only institutions such as the educational system, but also the norms, values, and beliefs about the gendered roles of women and men in society. Increasing the number of female teachers and female students will not, by itself, alleviate the disparities in formal education between girls and boys. However, it may be a stepping-stone to the larger, transformational changes that are needed to foster gender equitable societies.

What would help more women become teachers? Perhaps in-service trainings on sexual harassment in the work place would be helpful. Distance education might be particularly helpful for women, as it may allow them to stay with their families. Our findings show that women gained in self-confidence from the kind of trainings they received in Guinea, and working with them on teaching skills could have significant spillover effects.

Work is needed at various different levels. We must advocate for better support for teachers from international donors. At the MoE level, we must ensure that hiring and pay are fair and transparent, and local level corruption be addressed. And finally, individuals should continue to be supported to be agents of change in their schools and communities.

Further Research

The field of education in emergencies is a fairly new field of academic inquiry, and the questions are numerous. In general, there is a need for an evidence base for all kinds of post-conflict reconstruction programs.

For a new research agenda, I would argue that ethnographic studies of school culture are most important to understanding the impact of IRC training over the long term. Are instructional methods changing? If so, how? Can individual teachers change the culture of a school? This would require classroom observations and other participant-observation techniques at the small scale. (See Borman, *et al.*, 2005 for an example of combining classroom observations with ethnographic work on school culture to try to understand the relationship between teacher quality and classroom achievement.)

At the broader level, there are still open questions as to the right levels of centralization and decentralization for rapid reconstruction of educational systems. Finally, we have much to learn about women's empowerment in the West African context and how it can be supported meaningfully.

I hope that this study is a contribution to a research grounded in the realities of people's lived experiences.

14 Evidence suggests that this is already the trend. The World Bank reports that, "The 2005 NCTVA examinations for the teaching certificate (TC) indicate that more than 60 percent of candidates were pursuing the TC by distance. Evidence suggests that the vast majority of candidates for the TC will come from the distance program." (Wang 2007: 75).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Flyer

Did you ever work at an IRC School in Guinea?

If so, we need your help.

A research team is in Liberia interviewing former IRC teachers to find out how the training they received in Guinea is impacting their lives now.

If you would like to volunteer to be interviewed about your experiences, please contact Dr. Susan Shepler at **077-852083**. If you wish, you may text your number and she will call you back to set up an interview.

Alternately, you may contact one of the research assistants:

In Voinjama:

Fertiku Harris, 06-497948.

Nathaniel Boakai, 06-604743.

In Ganta:

Pauline Gborlawoe, 06-412018.

Your participation in the research is voluntary and you will receive no payment, but the answers you provide will help IRC and others understand the situation of people like you and perhaps develop better programs in the future.

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent for Research Participants

Purpose of Study:

The “Guinea Tracer Study” is being conducted by IRC by a research consultant and a team of research assistants in order to gather data about the long-term impact of education-related training of refugees in Guinea. We are interviewing former IRC teachers and classroom assistants about their lives and careers since repatriation to Sierra Leone or Liberia.

Informed Consent:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You will receive no payment for your participation in the study. However, by participating, you are helping IRC learn about the impacts of their programming, which will possibly contribute to the design of better programs for refugees and other war affected people in the future. The only risk to you of participating is possible distress at the retelling of traumatic events. You may choose to discontinue the interview at any time.

Your participation is confidential (that is, when the final report is written, no one will be able to connect your name to your answers.) So, please, feel free to answer openly and honestly. Tell us both the good and bad things about your experience.

However, IRC would like to keep a separate database with your name, location, current employment, and contact information (mobile number and e-mail address if available) so that IRC may be able to reach you regarding possible outreach or programming in the future.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Susan Shepler, at **shepler@american.edu** or by mobile at **+077 852083**.

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix 3: Interview Protocol (Draft 5)

TRACKING NUMBER:	DATE:
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I. Demographic Information

Name:	
Gender:	Nationality:
Current Location:	
Current Employment:	
Mobile:	E-mail (if any):

II. Before Displacement

1. Where were you living before you were displaced? What were you doing?
2. Did you have any teacher training before you were displaced? (If so, what?)
3. Did you ever work in a school before you were displaced? (If so, where? Doing what? For how long?)

III. During Displacement

1. What year did you go to Guinea? Where did you live in Guinea? (collect the whole history, dates and locations)
2. How did you begin working with IRC? What year was that?
3. What kind of work did you do with IRC? Where was that? (prompt for other work than teaching)
4. Did you receive any training from IRC? If so, what kinds?
5. (Collect titles of trainings or topics covered) (prompt for health, GBV, etc.)
6. Can you give an example of how you used the training while you were in Guinea?
7. Did you get any teacher certification because of your training with IRC? (prompt for IRC B Certificate).
8. Overall, how would you describe your experience working with IRC in Guinea?

IV. After Repatriation

1. When did you return to your country? Why?
2. Did UNHCR repatriate you? Did IRC provide any assistance with your repatriation?
3. What are your career goals? What kind of work would you like to do in future?
4. Did your work with IRC impact your career goals? How?
5. What kind of work are you doing now?

Depending on the answer, go to: 6A: teacher, 6B: not a teacher

6A. **If you are working as a teacher,** Why did you decide to continue teaching?

Besides teaching, what other work do you do in the school?

What certification do you have? Did you get your certification before, during, or after your displacement?

6B. **If you are not working as a teacher,** Why did you decide to leave teaching?

Do you think you would like to return to the teaching field some day?

7. Most of the training that you received was about work in the classroom. I'm wondering whether you used anything that you learned in IRC trainings in your life outside of school (for example in your current work, in your community or family)? If so how (give specific examples)? If not, why not? What were the constraints?

8. Did you pursue any further training when you returned? If so, where? Was your IRC training helpful in your course? How were the IRC training and your course different?

9. How are you working to develop your community?

10. Are you still in touch with your former IRC colleagues? Do you help each other? How?

11. What are some of the challenges you faced when you returned to your country?

12. Do you think your experience with IRC aided you after you returned to your country? In what ways?

13. Is there any training you wish you had received in Guinea that would be useful to your life now?

14. In general, how does the training you received in Guinea affect your life now (if at all)?

15. Is there anything else you would like to say that I have not asked you about, or anything you would like to ask me?

Finally, can you help me by telling me the contact information of any former IRC teachers you may know, wherever they may be? (continue on the back if necessary)

NAME	LOCATION	WORK PHONE

Appendix 4: Coding Framework

TRACKING NUMBER:

Sex	M, F
Current Location	(town name)
Current Country	Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia
Current location	1=rural 2=town 3=city
Current Employment	1=teacher 2=volunteer teacher 3=student 4=NGO worker 5=other 6=unemployed
Number of years in Guinea	Number
Teacher training before Guinea?	none, TC, HTC, C cert., B cert., AA, BA
Teaching experience before Guinea?	Yes, no
B or C certificate from IRC?	Yes, no
Teacher training after return?	none, TC, HTC, C cert., B cert., AA, Bachelors
Highest degree attained	Sec. Sch or H.S., TC, HTC, C cert., B cert., AA, Bachelors
Other work for IRC in Guinea?	Yes, no
Classroom Assistant?	Yes, no
Career Goals	1=teacher 2=NGO 3=other
Leadership role in school	1=not teaching 2=teacher only 3=leadership role
If not teaching, why did you leave the classroom?	0=teaching 1=money 2=hard to get approved 3=found a better job 4=other
If teaching, why?	0=not teaching 1=I love the work 2=I am trained in it 3=it is the easiest job to get 4=future of the nation
IRC experience helped you when you returned?	1=no 2=yes got a job teaching 3=yes got an NGO job 4=yes learned how to manage myself 5=further education 6=better teacher
How did you use the training outside the classroom?	1=convincing children to go to school 2=community mobilization 3=conflict resolution 4=health 5=family management 6=other job skills

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