Why Certification Matters:
A Review of State and non-State actions in Côte d'Ivoire for promoting schooling for the displaced

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What education options have displaced children once conflict uproots them from their home? How is their learning certified, and how can they make a bridge with their pre-war educational attainments? By drawing on the cases of Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire over the period 1992-2007 and the recent experience of primary and secondary students displaced by the Ivorian civil war, this contribution explores the challenges linked to the continuity of education. It examines in particular the extent to which non-state providers complement state action or act in parallel of it, when providing schooling opportunities to war-affected populations.

Clarifying the main debates

When it comes to formulate a sound educational response to a massive influx of displaced pupils, there are many dilemmas and many actors involved. With refugees, one of the most debated points is which curriculum to use - object of fierce debate among education experts - and questionings such as 'should refugees follow their home-based curriculum with the prospect to repatriate in their country of origin' or 'should they learn the host-based curriculum to help them integrate into the country of asylum' have shaped the overall response in the field of emergency education. These interrogations are based

on the fear that if refugee pupils continue their education in the host country using their home country curriculum, they are likely to experience trouble getting this education recognized in their country of asylum, which could led to extra difficulties when making their transition from school to work. If they receive instead an education based on their host country curriculum, they are likely to have trouble getting this education certified in their home country, thereby running the risk to fail to secure a decent living as returnees (Buckland, 2006;Sesnan, 1999, 2009).

Far from underplaying these arguments - which hold true to certain extents for given contexts - there is the need to put them in perspective to avoid missing more important points. Firstly, and contrary to the widespread idea that using the curriculum of the host country prevents refugees from returning home, several studies show that education has a relatively low effect on the decision to repatriate (Bird, 2003;Buckland, 2006;Sinclair, 2002). Let's therefore not overrate the impact of education. Secondly, refugees' ability to find work in the host or home country generally rarely depends on which curriculum they used during their school years. Unless they are lucky enough to successfully pass civil servant exams – or extremely well connected, the transition from school to work is usually quite painful in developing countries and youth unemployment is a major concern, with no exception for the educated youth (Atchoarena, 2000).

Perhaps a better way to approach the topic of the continuity of schooling for the displaced is to frame the questions differently. When students already have a certain level of education, how to ensure minimum waste of their pre-flight school years? What

education options do they have in their place of asylum, and how is their learning recognized in the new structures they integrate, for the ones who do not drop out? Taking such perspective has implicit consequences. Firstly, it tends to focus the attention on older students. Not surprisingly, continuing to go to school AND not being set back a few years in their education (when switching to a new structure) is of particular importance to students enrolled in high grades and for those at the end of an education cycle (whether primary, secondary or senior secondary). They already invested quite a lot in their education and not expect to have done so in vain. In comparison, the certification of the learning attainments of the youngest pupils – the ones enrolled in the first three grades of primary - appears less important. They did not have much time to build a lot of educational baggage, therefore cannot be set back too much.

Secondly, such questioning fully tackles the issues associated with certification, accreditation, validation and recognition[1]. When transferring mid-cycle, students may need to present some kind of documentation from their previous educational institution to ensure that they are enrolled in appropriate levels in the new structures they integrate, and this documentation has to be validated and recognized by the new institution. The failure to present such 'valid' documentation can have several consequences and can result in a strict barrier to entry. The literature burgeons of examples of obstacles to effective recognition, assessment, certification and validation of learning. The UNHCR/UNICEF

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[1] If we keep the definitions simple, *certification* is a proof of learning (for instance the provision of a formal certificate that recognizes a student's achievement). *Accreditation* occurs when the process of certification is done within an official programme recognized by a ministry of education. *Validation* is the process by which the authenticity of the accreditation is ascertained and takes place at different moments: for instance, entry into a new school at a different level (e.g. from primary to secondary) or entry into a new school in a new jurisdiction (e.g. when a displaced student is seeking entry to an institution in the place of asylum). *Recognition* is the acceptance by an outside party of a certificate's worth and validation. It is the desired result of the validation process (Kirk, 2009).

6th grade leaving certificate earned by Rwandan refugees in Tanzania in the mid-1990s was, for instance, not recognized by the Rwandan government on refugee's return, nor by the Tanzanian government for those who stayed (Bird, 2003). South Sudan has internally been divided for years by many educational boundaries, where separate education systems exist using separate curricula (Ugandan, Kenyan, Sudanese), and Southern Sudanese schools are challenged every year to figure out how and where their students will sit for national examinations (Sommers, 2005). A second consequence is that not presenting the right documents can result to no equivalence at all and to the restarting of education from scratch in the new system. Alternatively, displaced students may be set back a few years, depending on age, place and/or for the lucky ones, assessed level of education. Those who fled in the middle of an academic year face the additional challenge of documenting an incomplete year.

A third consequence of reframing the question is that it finally acknowledges the multiplicity of options displaced students have when continuing their education. A common mistake is to assume that all refugees follow the same path, including the same educational trajectory, and international support for refugee education usually takes a unitary form. There is either support for parallel schools, staffed by refugees who teach the home country curriculum with some digressions, or there is support for integration in the local schools. Both are rarely assisted at the same time despite the existence of multiple patterns of education amongst refugees and the diversity of educational supply. Displaced students who have enough means to continue their education have the option to blend into local schools upon arrival (provided acceptance by the school management),

or to enter the parallel structures set as emergency response. Non state providers of education are far from being a homogeneous group (they include NGOs, faith-based organizations, communities and private entrepreneurs), each has a different motive for involving themselves in education, as well as its own relationship with the State, which tends to vary over time (Rose, 2007).

Even if they do not cross international borders, students displaced by a civil war face similar challenges. If they were enrolled in a parallel system, or in schools no longer recognized by the Ministry of Education, how is this learning going to be assess when they re-enter into the formal system? When displaced in the middle of an academic year, are they condemned to an 'année blanche', i.e. a year 'that does not count'? And for those in the national exam classes (Grade 6, 10 and 13), to what extent are they going to be penalized for sitting national examinations? Some challenges are specific to IDPs. In the case of massive displacement in a country where it is constitutional duty to provide equal access to education to its residents, to what extent have displaced students access to the schools in the places of asylum, which we already imagine overwhelmed by the normal intake? And what happens to the students who remain in areas no longer under government control? Sesnan (2009) rightly points out that States engaged in an internal conflict often cut off 'rebel' areas from their national examinations systems and prevent movement of papers and examiners. Students, who naturally want to avoid wasting their time and who wish to have their school years validated, have (or not) the option to sit the exam elsewhere, in areas labeled safe by the MoE, until the Ministry assesses the situation in the war-affected areas.

The role of the State

The primacy of national governments is often recalled in writings on education in emergencies (INEE Minimum Standards, guidance tools, agency policy documents). Governments are presented as the main duty-bearers for providing access to education and as the main drivers of educational policy. When there are gaps in provision due to extreme circumstances (a civil war for instance, or a sudden influx of displaced people), it is generally accepted that non governmental associations step in to provide additional capacity, with the main pitfall to present them as speaking with one voice (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008;Paulson, 2007;Paulson and Rappleye, 2007).

Although elegantly formulated, the primacy of the State does not hold much in certain contexts and one notices in practice various attempts to sideline national governments. True, the State has lost its monopoly in decision-making. Discussions on governance increasingly highlight the multiple faces of the concept, the multiple layers, and the relationships between them. The sector of education has changed in recent years, and parallel systems have burgeoned in developing countries along State-provided education (Davies, 2005;Hoppers, 2005, 2006;Robertson and Dale, 2003;Rose, 2007). A detailed mapping is likely to show that the educational terrain is much more complex than assumed and that there is the need to go beyond the 'formal' / 'non formal' popular dichotomy in education, or at least to define these categories well to avoid misreading and oversimplification. The term 'non formal education' has come to cover so many things (from schools ran by community members to NGO-funded schools, literacy projects, youth skills development, peer training, and even group sensitization on certain

themes) that some experts have argued that it has lost its meaning and relevance because, despite the multiplicity of forms non formal education takes, the term continues to give the impression that all forms of non formal education are the same, that they are manipulable in the same manner, and that there are no similarities with formal education (Hoppers, 2006). As Hoppers rightly points out, it is difficult to draw a line and many education-related initiatives show characteristics belonging to both formal and non formal systems. He also points out that debates surrounding the term usually stay confined to expert meetings and that the formal/non formal dichotomy still strikingly prevails in other arenas. For him and others, whatever term is used, the most important is to acknowledge the plural forms of non formal education, to recognize that it takes different characteristics depending on its form, and that it has different objectives, different clienteles, and different relationships with the State, with varying degrees of relevance for educational policy (Hoppers, 2006;Rose, 2007).

Despite this multiplicity of non formal and non State initiatives, it would be wrong to completely turn back on the State, mainly because by doing so, we would ignore their capacity to expand or contract the boundaries of the formal system according to the imperatives they have. Hoppers wrote that States themselves can and do establish non formal initiatives when it suits the needs of the system. They can also go to great lengths to protect these initiatives from being overwhelmed by procedures and restrictions that normally apply to the formal system. What happened in Côte d'Ivoire is a good illustration of this. We'll come back to the details later, suffice here to say that the State has created parallel structures in addition to the existing schools to absorb the displaced

students, that it accepted thinning out the curriculum to match a school year shortened by conflict and displacement, and that the educational system functioned several years with multiple systems and multiple dates for the start of the school year and for national examination sessions.

Another reason not to turn back on the State, which fully links to certification and recognition debates, is that in many cases, non State actors which deliver non formal education for children and youth, consider crucial to be linked with the formal system, regardless of their approval or critique of it. Non formal programmes validated by the State gain indeed in credibility, which has an impact of both enrollment and continuation of schooling as parents and students get a certain guarantee that they will not invest their time and money in vain.

Other factors affecting the willingness and capacity of a State to respond to the needs of the people displaced into its territory are more pragmatic-related; it includes the relative size of the displaced population, the status of the existing infrastructures, what resources are ready to use, the available manpower to ensure adequate teaching and supervision, and – despite the difficulty to make accurate predictions - the length of time the displaced population stays. Kirk rightly pointed out that government policy can change over time if it becomes clear that the situation in the places of asylum is likely to last longer than predicted, if there is resentment over draining of local resources, and/or if there is a feeling that support for the displaced is out of proportion compared to the situation of the host populations (Kirk, 2009). Perceptions of the displaced populations may also shift,

depending on how the situation that had led to their flight evolves. The question that remains is how to best accompany changes of situation. In education, it translates into how to overcome obstacles to effective assessment, certification and recognition of learning, and how to make a bridge between different types of supply of education to enable the learner to navigate between those.

The Ivorian case study

Côte d'Ivoire is an interesting case because it faced both mass refugee and IDP influx in the same period, and was therefore confronted to the many challenges linked to the continuity of education for the displaced students.

Context

The country has been split in two since September 2002 with rebel forces controlling the northern half of the country. A direct consequence for the national educational system has been the delinking of six educational districts with the Ministry of Education (two districts were partly in the government-controlled area and were only partially disconnected), which deprived many schools of funding, supplies and basic equipment in 2002-2003, 2003-2004, and 2004-2005. During that period, the functioning of the schools and the holding of the national examinations were severely disrupted in the North and in areas close to the frontline. Schools were no longer taken into account in regional planning, their credits were frozen and no MoE-trained teaching staff could be deployed. At the beginning of the war, schools closed down (completely during the first trimester of the school year) and civil servants who were in place in the northern half of the country -

including teachers and education officials - were called back by the Ministry of Education to be redeployed in government-controlled areas. Not everyone left though, and 12% of the educational staff stayed in the war-affected areas to continue their work, despite government injunctions to go and work elsewhere. It is estimated that a third of the primary schools and half of the secondary schools reopened in the north in the first semester of 2003, enabling a third of the normal intake to register at school (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2007;Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa, 2004). In December 2002, the MEN adopted an emergency programme for education, which aimed to adapt the formal system in the south to be able to respond to the sudden influx of students, and to find solutions for the north (Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa, 2004). The emergency programme ran parallel to the usual framework[2]. In recent years, the situation has improved. 2007 marked the return of a single date for the start of the school year and the end of multiple arrangements, which depended on where and in which institutions students were enrolled. The return of the professional teaching and pedagogical staff has accelerated close to the ex-frontline and in the northern half of the country, restoring a sense of normalcy in these areas.

As civil war was still raging in western Côte d'Ivoire, 40,000 Liberians crossed the border in 2003, following resumption of fighting in Liberia, and settled in the region of Tabou, in South-West Côte d'Ivoire. The area had already been home to Liberian

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[2] The 'Plan National de Développement du Secteur Education/Formation' (PNEF) was planned for a 10-year period in line with the MDG and the EFA goals (1997-2007) and aimed at responding to educational needs in a normal situation. It had no contingency plan. When the government adopted the Emergency Programme for Education in December 2002, it created the contingency plan that was lacking, but it also created a whole new parallel system, with many overlaps with the existing one, and with the risk of not being able to stop it should the crisis end (Kagawa, 2005;Lanoue, 2007;Obura, 2003).

refugees since 1992, up to several hundred thousand (325,000 in 1996). With the end of the first Liberian war and the start of UNHCR's repatriation programme, the bulk of them repatriated to Liberia between 1997 and 1999. For the remaining caseload, budget cuts led UNHCR to rethink its response in terms of refugee assistance and the Ivorian government was pushed to accept the idea of local integration. In education, local integration meant the end of refugee schools at both primary and secondary levels (which had been favored from the start and had largely been funded by the international community), the integration of the remaining children into existing Ivorian structures and a switch from a parallel system of education to a formal system (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2009). Surprisingly, no plans were made for secondary school students and while secondary education had been supported until then through refugee schools, assistance stopped in 1999, with a few exceptions for students sitting in exam classes. For a range of reasons, many refugees resisted integration, even in the lower grades. Parents feared acculturation and the loss of English because of the use of French in the classroom, and teachers argued that the language switch would have a negative impact on students' performance. Liberian teachers were among the most vocal opponents. They were indeed losing many privileges in the process – their jobs, their main source of income, food rations and a certain status amongst their peers – yet it would be misleading to limit their mobilization to the defense of vested rights. Some of them genuinely believed that integration was a mistake under the proposed conditions. The timing was short (refugees were informed in June 1999 of the plan to integrate their 20,000 refugee children in Ivorian schools in October the same year), the new hired teaching workforce inexperienced to respond to Liberian pupils' special needs, infrastructure was lacking,

and too little pedagogical attention had been given to the issue of equivalence between the two educational systems. Until the last minute, it was unclear how children would integrate and the modalities of implementation remained vague. Refugee schools were eventually re-used in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 for two transitional years, where students were initiated to the Ivorian curriculum by using French as main language of instruction. In 2001, only ten per cent of the expected number of Liberian children enrolled in Ivorian schools. The rest either entered refugee schools (no longer cautioned by NGOs or the State), or dropped out, or repatriated to Liberia (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2009). It had been so difficult to introduce the idea of integrating refugee children into Ivorian schools in 1999-2001 that the decision to restore refugee schools in 2003, when a relatively small influx of refugees crossed the border, came rather unexpectedly. The option of direct integration for the youngest children was not even promoted. Three years later, refugee schools closed down and the remaining caseload was absorbed in the Ivorian structures.

The response of the State towards its citizens

The Ivorian State has demonstrated its capacity to expand and contract formal systems in various ways. Faced with the split of the country, it had several reactions, including creating parallel structures in the main towns controlled by the government to help absorb the displaced students, thinning out the curriculum in these parallel structures and also in the schools continuing to operate in the war-affected areas, and allowing different school calendars and different national examination sessions to exist side-by-side for several years (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2007).

1. Parallel structures

The *écoles relais* started in January 2003 in the South (four months after the formal schools) and were effective for a year[3]. They closed down in August 2003 after national examination sessions took place for grade 6, 10 and 13. A series of ministerial decrees set the operational and administrative framework of these structures. A new time schedule was defined for these schools, as well as new dates for national examinations, and part of the teaching staff who had been displaced was relocated there. According to Ministry sources, out of the 700,000 students who were enrolled in primary and secondary schools in the north before the war, 135,000 students registered in the south to continue their education; the majority entered the existing structures and about 10-20% were absorbed in the *écoles relais* (Ministry of Education, 2003). The Ministry showed a relative flexibility in setting up these emergency schools and pragmatism won in order to minimize time loss. The bulk of the *écoles relais* were using existing infrastructures to operate, the system of 'double shifting' became the norm to adjust to limited space, and nearly 4,000 teachers were reassigned in the new schools, of which 3,500 effectively relocated. Where there were not enough teachers for the number of students, volunteer staff was temporary recruited by the State[4].

Not only did the Ministry create alternative schools, it also created a whole parallel administration to manage the *écoles relais*, which included specific Divisions of

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[3] At primary level, 75 *écoles relais* and 516 classrooms were set up. At secondary level, there were respectively 64 schools and 1,142 classrooms (Koukougnon, 2003).

[4] Eight months after the *écoles relais* closed down, the *écoles de sauvegarde* were set up in the spring of 2004, for one year (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2007). They were aimed at secondary school students whose education had been disrupted by conflict in the previous two years, and at children of military staff and civil servants who had been relocated south. While they were roughly functioning like the *écoles relais,* there was no continuity from one school to another.

Education in Abidjan, Daloa and Yamoussoukro (*DREN relais* at the regional level) and in Dimbokro and San Pédro (*DDEN relais* at the departmental level). It also included specific staff training institutions (CAFOP relais in Abidjan, Yamoussoukro, Gagnoa, Daloa, Dabou, Grand-Bassam, Abengourou and Aboisso) (Ministry of Education, 2003). This parallel administration created certain issues as records for these emergency structures were not centralized by the usual divisions of education.

The number of displaced students who attended these emergency structures is unknown. Registration was done in such ways that it was impossible for the staff to know exactly how many pupils had come from the North and from the war-affected areas. Anyone could join the new structures. Some students also probably used them as bridges to re-enter the formal system, whether they were displaced or not. The origin of students enrolled in a public or private secondary school before the war was relatively easy to attest. As there was a high chance they got registered in the national database at their entry in secondary, it was easy to check if they were displaced from the North of not. Assessing their levels was less simple, unless they just sat a national exam. While the central register keeps track of their registration year, it doe not keep track of their progress and is not updated each time a student passes a level. This gave room to various misuses, including the readmission in the system of students excluded from a school and some bypassing the system by registering in an exam class without having the academic level required (personal communication with Ministry officials).

In the rebel-controlled areas, many schools reopened a few months after the start of the war, boosted by local initiatives. It was a rather spontaneous phenomenon which was initially aiming at keeping the children off the streets. In certain neighborhoods/cities/villages, teachers and goodwilled individuals organized themselves and opened schools. If a teacher could not reach the school where he/she usually taught, he/she stayed and gave a class in a school close to his/her home. A large number of volunteers also intervened, ranging from private school instructors to retired teachers, and secondary-school students. As the conflict was lasting more than expected, a group of teachers and educational officials attempted to coordinate the existing small-scale initiatives to create a more structured system. The main goal of this coordinating group was to have the Ministry of Education recognize the learning taking place in the North, to avoid an *année blanche* (a year with no formal certification of learning, thus no acknowledged academic progress). To reach that, the schools had to follow certain standards in terms of pedagogic content, timetables, teaching staff characteristics and progress measurements. No formal certification of learning could occur without.

2. *Thinning out curriculum*

In the South, the *écoles relais* used a light version of the curriculum. The MoE had made certain adjustments to match a decrease in the number of study hours due to the system of double shifting and a school year with less weeks (from January to August 2003 instead of from September to June). In practice, the light version of the curriculum could not be dispatched to the schools on time and adjustments were made on a case-by-case basis. The choice of suppressing some chapters and topics was eventually left to the teachers as

teaching the full program was impossible with the shortened school year. The *écoles relais* were often opened in a rush and lacked appropriate materials. School manuals came in late and State subsidies arrived in many cases when the school year was over[5].

In the rebel-controlled areas, the curriculum was thinned out to match a 25-week school year instead of a 40-week school year, and the number of hours was reduced between 10% and 35% depending on level and topic. It was decided that sixth-grade, tenth-grade and thirteenth-grade students would receive extra attention from the teaching staff as they were enrolled in exam classes. Timetables were agreed upon and provisional exam dates were set for the end of November 2003. The first semester was supposed to run until 1 August 2003 and the second semester until 7 November. The volume of teaching was adjusted according to the new schedule, then dispatched to the schools in the north with the updated timetables and progress measurement tools. What is striking in the rebel-controlled areas is that these decisions were made by non State actors. These included DREN representatives, pedagogic counselors, retired education officials, and teachers who had chosen to stay in the north to continue schooling activities. The Ministry of Education did not intervene there for a whole year, having serious doubts about the quality of learning and not willing to validate a discount education[6]. Responding to different sources of pressure (including UNESCO), it eventually commissioned educational experts to assess the quality of learning in the areas no longer under government control in September 2003. The mission eventually gave credit to the

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[5] The *écoles relais* and their substitute *écoles de sauvegarde* were partly funded by subsidies initially allocated to the north (personal communication with Ministry officials).

[6] Records indicated that 4,465 non professional staff ran the school along with 1,767 trained teachers, and until the set-up by the State of a minimal administration, there were doing it without supervision (Ministry of Education, 2003).

education system in place in the north. It acknowledged the use of the national curriculum by the northern schools, noted that progress was regularly measured by tests at all levels, and recognized that peer training was done with the volunteer staff, through class visits and pedagogic workshops ran by trained teachers and pedagogical counselors. The mission eventually recommended taking the existing initiatives into account, to validate the 2002-2003 school year by organizing the exam sessions as soon as possible, and to prepare for the start of the 2003-04 school year (Ministry of Education, 2003).

3. Different school calendars and examinations

Table 1 illustrates the multiplicity of school calendars and the different national examination sessions that existed side-by-side for several years.

Table 1. *Dates of national examinations since the beginning of the war, 2002-2003 to 2006-2007*

		Location	Baccalauréat (13th grade)	BEPC (10th grade)	CEPE (6th grade)
2002-2003	1st session	Southern CI	June 17-20, 2003	July 1-2, 2003	June 24, 2003
	2nd session	Southern CI*	August 26-30, 2003	August 20-21, 2003	August, 2003
	3rd session	Zouhan Hounien	-	December 9-10, 2003	December 9, 2003
	4th session	Northern CI	February 11-13, 2004	February 11-12, 2004	February 5, 2004
2003-2004	1st session	Southern CI	June 22-25, 2004	July 6-7, 2004	June 29, 2004
	2nd session	Southern CI**	August 24-28, 2004	-	-
	3rd session	Southern CI***	November 23-27, 2004	November 23-24, 2004	November 10, 2004
	4th session	Northern CI	Planned in November 2004 but cancelled due to bombings early November		
2004-2005	1st session	Southern CI	June 21-25, 2005	July 5-6, 2005	June 28, 2005
	2nd session	Northern CI	March 2-3, 2006	March 2-3, 2006	March 14, 2006
2005-2006	1st session	Southern CI	June 25-29, 2006	August 8-9, 2005	August 1, 2005
	2nd session	Northern CI	Aug.31-Sept.2, 2006	Aug.31-Sept.1, 2006	September 12, 2006
2006-2007		South & North CI	Only one exam session planned for the 2006-2007 school year.		

Source: Ministry of Education (MEN) / Direction des Examens et Concours (DECO) (2007)

* This session was planned for the *école relais*.
** This session was planned for the technical baccalauréats.
*** This session was planned for the *école de sauvegarde*. Although they only targeted secondary-school students, an extra exam session was hold for 6th grade students.

Following-up on the mission's recommendations, the Ministry of Education sent administrative officials to the north to prepare for the holding of the national examinations in these zones[7]. A few months later, it set up a minimal administration in these areas to regain partial supervision control[8].

Holding different exam sessions in the north and south of the country did not come without difficulties. In terms of logistics, there were various issues: the preparation of the exam centers; the registration of candidate students in the central exam register (in the absence of a school administration); how to ensure the securing and dispatching of the exam subjects? How to ensure the securing of the staff sent by the MoE to monitor the exam sessions? The marking was also a problem. Who to use and where to do it? The first year (2002-2003), exams were hold in the north and were graded in the south in early 2004[9]. A local NGO registered all candidates and paid the exam fee for everyone. No exam took place in the North to validate the 2003-2004 school year due to increasing tensions between the belligerents. In contrast, there were two examination sessions in 2006, one to validate the 2004-2005 school year (in March) and one to validate the 2005-2006 one (in August). It is for these sessions that the UN took over some of the logistical tasks, including the securing of the MoE monitoring staff, the dispatching and securing of the exam subjects and copies, and the safeguarding of the exam centers.

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[7] Even though the MoE had announced an *année blanche* for the north in June 2003, there was a strong willingness to keep a certain unity in the national education system and to avoid penalizing northern students more than necessary.

[8] The holding of exams in 2004 and the set-up of a minimal administration in the rebel-controlled areas are likely to have had a significant impact on the decision of parents to register their children at school. In 2002-03, there were 186,000 to receive primary education in the rebel-controlled areas, 70% less than the previous year. In 2003-04, the number doubled and reached 360,000 (Ecole pour Tous, 2006).

[9] Some interpreted that as a proof of the MoE lack of confidence in the educational staff who had stayed in the rebel-controlled areas.

Despite its relative openness to adjust the formal system to respond to a crisis situation, the State had different attitudes whether it dealt with parallel systems in south or north. While the exam session for the north was cancelled in 2004, the exam session for the parallel schools was not cancelled in the south, they happened a month behind schedule. While the Ministry of Education openly questioned the teaching skills of the volunteer staff who was operating schools in the north, the ability of the volunteers who taught in the *écoles relais* was hardly discussed, although they were sharing similar characteristics[10]. The quality of learning in the parallel schools was never assessed in the south while educational experts were commissioned to evaluate the northern schools.

If one can regret the 2003-2004 *année blanche*, the State reaction minimized disruption of schooling for many students, especially those enrolled in secondary. Clearly, non-State providers were the main drivers of change in the north. However without the State embracing their initiative, it would not have lasted much. Parents, who were funding most of the operational costs of the schools in 2003, were increasingly reluctant to do so if the State continued to disregard this education. While enrollment rates were still low in the north in 2003, it tripled in 2004 as a consequence of the holding of exams in February and the set-up of a minimal administration. If it is sometimes criticized not to have responded immediately, the Ivorian Ministry of Education had nonetheless succeeded in building on a non-state initiative. By officially recognizing that the teaching in the north met enough standard to be considered part of the formal system, it opened the door to relatively smooth certification of learning in non standard circumstances.

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[10] Volunteers teaching in primary schools were requested to have the BEPC diploma (equivalent to end of tenth grade) and those teaching in secondary schools the baccalaureate (equivalent to end of thirteenth grade). This was not strictly applied in the practice.

The response of the State towards refugees

While the Ivorian State played an active role in providing formal schooling opportunities to displaced students and to those remaining in rebel-control areas, it adopted a strikingly low profile on educational matters concerning Liberian refugees displaced in its territory. In the early 1990s, at the peak of refugee influx, the Ivorian government anticipated difficulty in integrating Liberian children into the existing infrastructure, pointing out that there were already not enough schools for the Ivorian residents. The Ivorian State was therefore not opposed to the set-up of parallel schools for refugees, especially since it did not expect them to last long-term (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2009). I will not detail here the rationales advanced to support the creation of a parallel system of education. Suffice to say that there was wide agreement among the stakeholders involved to do such thing, and these included refugees (parents, students and teachers), the Ivorian State, UNHCR and NGOs involved in emergency education[11].

1. *Parallel structures: from informal to formal to informal*

In the beginning, most refugee education was undertaken by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), UNHCR's implementing partner for emergency education in south west Côte d'Ivoire. Schools were free, staffed by refugee teachers (including former Liberian teachers and newly trained staff) and were following the Liberian curriculum[12]. In the late 1990s, with the end of the Liberian civil war, many refugees

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[11] For more detailed information, see (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2009).

[12] That does not mean that all refugees registered their children in these parallel structures. Some opted for direct integration in the Ivorian schools, including children of some refugee teachers who were planning to stay relatively long in Côte d'Ivoire.

repatriated to Liberia. Due to subsequent decrease in funding, UNHCR lobbied the Ivorian government to integrate the remaining caseload in formal schools.

Between 1999 and 2001, the Ivorian State and many refugees resisted local integration, the former because it knew there was not enough infrastructure and teaching staff to ensure a smooth integration, the latter because integration meant equivalence issues between the two systems, an abrupt stop for Liberian secondary schools and the end of tolerated refugee schools. When it was clear that integration would ineluctably happen, both Ivorian State and refugees lobbied for a gradual phase-out over several years. The first year, Grade 1 pupils would be absorbed in Ivorian schools and refugee schools would continue teaching Grade 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6; the second year, refugees schools would only teach Grade 3, 4, 5 and 6; and etc. The central argument of the Ivorian government was that parents should not be forced to opt for local integration. If some were willing to continue their education under the Liberian system, the Ministry of Education suggested that the existing refugee schools be taken over by private Liberian schools officially registered at the MoE (Ministry of Education, 2001b). The State ideas were never implemented and when integration occurred in practice, a parallel system emerged which continued using the Liberian curriculum, without formal authorization from the MoE (although 'locally' tolerated).

In August 2001, an agreement protocol was eventually signed between UNHCR and the Ivorian government, under which the government committed to support local integration at the primary level by integrating the youngest in Grade 1 (provided the absorption

capacity was enough) and by placing children enrolled in higher grades at appropriate levels (Ministry of Education, 2001a). UNHCR had successively shifted the burden of the Liberian children to the Ivorian state. In practice, there was no standard by which to assess refugees' levels and ad hoc equivalence was the norm. The bulk of refugee children were directly put into Grade 1 and Grade 2, regardless of the number of years of primary schooling they had in the parallel schools. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, students in mid-cycle were often restarting their schooling from scratch.

2. *Certification of secondary students*

No plan was made for secondary school students. Direct integration in the Ivorian schools was not an option and there was no agreement protocol between the Ivorian government and UNHCR. Between 1999 and 2001, support for secondary education was downsized to a minimum. UNHCR limited its support to students enrolled in the exam classes (Grades 9 and 12 in the Liberian system) by facilitating the sitting of the WAEC examination; students enrolled in other grades got no attention. If they wanted to continue to go to school in Côte d'Ivoire, one of their options was to join one of these parallel institutions that had clandestinely emerged after the closing of the ADRA/UNHCR schools. These *écoles clandestines*, as they were commonly labelled, offered an opportunity to continue secondary education using the Liberian curriculum. Not surprisingly they came as a relief to many Liberian students who had already invested a lot in their education. The schools were not receiving external assistance and were mainly funded by parents' contributions and tuition fees.

The Ivorian State was strikingly absent in discussions concerning secondary education for refugees. UNHCR and the *écoles clandestines* were the ones negotiating procedures for holding the WAEC exams - UNHCR with the WAEC central registrar in Ghana and the *écoles clandestines* with the Liberian counterparts (Ministry of Education and the WAEC Liberian office), in sharp contrast with other contexts (Guinea, for instance, where the Ministry of Education played a major role in dialoguing with its Liberian counterparts to ensure the provision of an Anglophone education to Liberian refugees in its territory (Kirk, 2009)).

3. *Adjusting educational infrastructure and the 'carte scolaire'*

One argument of the State to resist local integration in 1999-2001 was that there was not enough infrastructure and teaching staff to smoothly absorb the refugee intake. To give a few figures, it was anticipated that 20,000 Liberian children would integrate the formal system of Côte d'Ivoire, which would have required the building of 450 classrooms, 250 teachers' housing units, sanitation and canteen facilities, and extra teachers to hire (Ministry of Education, 2001a). In terms of infrastructure, despite repeated indications by the Ivorian government that it was unprepared, donors were slow to commit to a share of the cost and financial support for building up additional classrooms did not arrive until late 2001 when UNHCR finally committed to fund the construction of 90 classrooms. One year after this announcement, only 55 per cent of the 90 classrooms were completed and about 10% of the expected number of Liberian children had enrolled in Ivorian schools (Ministry of Education, 2002;UNHCR, 2001, 2002).

If the Ivorian State has not excelled in bringing forward his views in educational matters concerning Liberian refugees, it would be wrong to assume that it did not build on non-state initiatives. Perhaps the most relevant example is the change happening with the *carte scolaire*. While it remained unchanged in the 1990s despite significant increase of the number of school-age children in areas hosting refugees, three former refugee schools were 'formalized' in 2007 and taken over by the State (one completely and two were still in the process). They were located in rural hubs that had developed as a consequence of the refugee influx (the villages of Gozon, Nero Village, and Yeouli). The schools were providing education to both refugee and Ivorian residents, and there was a relatively large proportion of Ivoirians enrolled. On the advice of local educational officials who had checked the quality of infrastructure and learning in these schools and with the push of an NGO, the Ministry of Education allocated one teacher to the school of Yeouli in 2006-2007. Should the other two schools comply in time with the necessary requirements, it was also informally agreed to provide them with staff too. Meanwhile, the schools were 'informally' recognized locally and students able to sit national examinations, provided volunteers continued to be trained and supervised by local educational officials (personal communication with local educational officials, Spring 2007).

Concluding remarks

When conflict uproots them from their home, displaced children have more than one path to pursue their education. As they are likely to start in a system and continue in another, the challenge is to create bridges between the different types of supply and systems of grade equivalence, to allow them to shift between educational systems without loosing

the benefit of previous learning (Kirk, 2009). The case of Côte d'Ivoire illustrates both the complementarity of the State and non state actors, and points of tensions between them fluctuating over time. The State has never 'done it all'. True, the Ivorian government has demonstrated its resilience by expanding and contracting the formal educational system in various ways. Faced with the split of the country, it created parallel structures in the south to help absorb the displaced students, it thinned out the curriculum, and it allowed different school calendars and different national examination sessions to exist side-by-side for several years. Faced with the refugee influx and UNHCR presence, it was surprisingly shy, and has little succeeded in bringing forward his views in educational matters concerning Liberian refugees (the gradual transition, not forcing parents to opt for local integration, transforming some refugee schools in private structures registered by the State, …). But beyond these technicalities, perhaps the most relevant contribution of this case study is to have stressed the changing nature of the relationships the State maintains with non state providers. The challenge is to start and keep communication lines with relevant counterparts, not to be left out decision making and not to penalize displaced students more than necessary.

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