

Sierra Leone: Reconstructing a Patrimonial State

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Case Studies - Empowerment

Four case studies examine the effects of donor interventions on the capacities and opportunities of the poor as part of the project on promoting empowerment in post-conflict contexts.

About FRIDE

FRIDE is an independent think-tank based in Madrid, focused on issues related to democracy and human rights; peace and security; and humanitarian action and development. FRIDE attempts to influence policy-making and inform public opinion, through its research in these areas.

The 40th anniversary of Independence Day on 27 April 2001 was celebrated low key. At that point in time, Sierra Leone was a de facto UN protectorate under an integrated UN mission called UNAMSIL (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone) with some 17.500 troops and an expenditure of up to 2 million USD per day.¹ To these, a large number of bilateral donors, UN agencies and the whole range of International Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) were added. Freetown's streets were quickly jammed by increasing numbers of immense white Land-Cruisers with all kinds of logos. From their air-conditioned interior expatriates contemplated the utter poverty.

In 1999, a peace agreement had been imposed on the main rebel group – the United Revolutionary Front (RUF) – possible only by being backed with the military support that mainly the British Army had rendered to the defunct state. Sierra Leone had become the definition of state fragility,

¹ <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamsil/facts.html>

where the state had – long before the outbreak of the war – lost any kind of democratic legitimacy and the public administration had redrawn from service provision. When in 1991 rebels crossed from neighbouring Liberia, the state quickly lost control of its sovereign territory. So the 40th anniversary of independence was rather a moment of anxious reflection than of celebration.

This brief article wants to trace the causes of the war back to the flawed polity inherited by British colonial rule and the steady institutional decline of the post-colonial state. It describes some options taken by donors in their post-conflict assistance and investigates how these approaches touched upon the underlying power-structures and mechanisms of social exclusion. It thereby applies an analytical framework of ‘empowerment’ and asks inasmuch donors are complying in practice with their claims to base their interventions on rights and to seek to include greater opportunities and wider choices for people to enjoy decent livelihoods.

Background: History and the Course of War

Sierra Leone is a West-African country with rich natural endowments whose culture is given shape by the rain-forest.² The territory of today’s Sierra Leone has been inhabited by a range of ethnic groups, of which the Temne in the North and the Mende in the

South-West are dominant. A complex caste-based system of local rule that distinguished between ruling families and descendent of ‘slaves’ was the societal form comprising several small-scale powers of warring ethnic groups. It preceded and outlived the ‘discovery’ of the West-African country when in 1460 the first Portuguese sailors arrived and baptised the terrain. Later Britons took control and used the Bunce Island in Sierra Leone river to establish slave trade and later established a settlement on the Freetown peninsula. In the 19th century Sierra Leone had been dominated by the division between the ‘colony’, larger Freetown mainly populated and dominated by descendants of freed slaves, so-called Krios, and the ‘protectorate’, the hinterland that had been assigned to Britain in the 1884/85 Berlin conference to be added to the coastal outpost. Only after 1889, the colonial power began to take control in order to avoid French intrusion. Ethnic boundaries were disregarded. The colonial state structure had been largely extractive, although functional in some aspects. However, the system of indirect rule left a heritage of twisted ‘customary’ rule manipulated to ease colonial administration, fostered ethnic divides and a division between urban citizens and rural subjects.³ A number of anti-colonial uprisings and the politics of ‘divide and rule’ with both local rural elites and Europeanised Freetown residents dominated the colonial period. In the 50s, a successive negotiated handing-over led to sovereignty in 1961. Sierra Leone had been since member of the Commonwealth and had stayed under influence of Britain. Although, in some phases, namely under president Siaka Stevens,

² For some in-depth study of the Sierra Leone society and the history of the war see: Paul Richards (1996), *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, Oxford; Mariane Ferme (2001), *The Underneath of Things: Violence, history and the Everyday in Sierra Leone*, Berkeley; see also the Liberian case in Stephen Ellis (1999), *The Mask of Anarchy: the Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, London.

³ For an in-depth analysis on the heritage of urban-rural cleavages and the manipulation of traditional administration within British indirect rule see Mahmood Mamdani (1996), *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton; and, Catherine Boone (2003), *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice*, Cambridge.

socialist rhetoric was marshalled, Sierra Leone was always sympathetic to the West. Consequently, aid finance was deployed, replacing domestic state services rather than building capacities.⁴

After independence, constant state decline followed. In the first elections, the Sierra Leone peoples party SLPP won. They soon instated a heavily biased system of rule highly favourable towards their Southern constituencies. When in 1967 Siaka Stevens from the All Peoples Congress APC was elected president by a very narrow margin he was expelled from office days later by a military coup. Soon, after he was reinstated and, with that, the successive process of de-institutionalisation was continued. The rigging of elections in 1973, the abolition of the constitution in 1976 and its replacement by a one-party system, the elimination of the decentralised governance structure, the suppression of student revolts in 1977 and the increasingly authoritarian control of the party were the landmarks in which was to end up in a neo-patrimonial system in which every handling of state-resources was grouped around the fellowship to the president. The withdrawal of the state from any kind of service provision culminated in the declaration of the then president Joseph Saidu Momoh in 1988 where he said education is a privilege not a right.⁵ While the state was able to raise 15% of GDP in taxes in the period 1974-82, it had fallen to a mere 5% between 1983-91.⁶ When, in September 1991, a

multi-party constitution re-established formal democracy, the state was left a hollow shell and was soon to lose even the alleged control over the territory.

The March 1991 attack on Sierra Leone territory by a mixed guerrilla group, composed by Sierra Leonean, Liberians and Burkinabe, started the ten year civil war. For the then government in Freetown it seemed a matter of little concern in a remote place where government did not reach anyway. It soon was to spread out and reached Freetown finally in 1997, when rebels invaded large parts of the capital. Between 1991 and 2002, various fighting forces clashed. Amongst these were⁷

- Revolutionary United Front (RUF): initially a blend of urban intellectuals inspired by Marxism, Pan-Africanism and Libyan Green Book ideology and army mutineers, they were soon joined by rural youths. Whereas ideological motivation was eminent in forming the movement, during the course of the war intellectual leaders were eliminated and in the last phase of the war a millenarian attitude justified gross abuse and exploitation of the rural population. As of 1992 Foday Sankoh was the leader. The RUF became to be known as one of the most brutal African guerrilla groups, amputating rural villagers and abducting children to turn them into fighters. The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission finds them responsible for over 60 percent of the atrocities. The RUF had been aided by Charles Taylor from Liberia.

⁴ Deborah Bräutigam (2000), *Aid Dependence and Governance*, Stockholm (EGDI); describes how aid agencies – namely the European Commission, the German GTZ and the World Bank carved out their respective territories in the 1970s. http://www.egdi.gov.se/pdf/20001pdf/2000_1.pdf

⁵ Steven Archibald and Paul Richards (2002), 'Converts to Human Rights? Popular Debate about War and Justice in Rural Central Sierra Leone', *Africa*, 72, 2002.

⁶ Deborah Bräutigam (2000), *Aid Dependence and Governance*, Stockholm (EGDI), p. 22. http://www.egdi.gov.se/pdf/20001pdf/2000_1.pdf

⁷ The fighting forces and the atrocities that are ascribed to them are documented in the report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2004, *Witness to Truth*, Freetown, Vol. 2; Chapter 2, Findings, paragraph 'findings of perpetrator responsibility', pp. 41 – 83, www.trcsierraleone.org

- The National Army, a largely ineffective and badly equipped troop, fought the RUF under various governments with meagre results. The syndrome of the 'sobel' – soldier at day, rebel at night – describes the suffering that was inflicted on the population by these actors as well. As of 1999, the British lead International Military Advisory and Training Team IMATT, conducted training as part of security sector reform within the wider British governance strategy.
- Various splinter groups from RUF and the Sierra Leone Army, formed the fighting force that supported the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) that has been attributed severe violations of human rights.
- From the beginning of the war local groups of mainly farmers formed voluntary Civil Defence Forces CDF. They became known for their traditional hunting tracking techniques and belief in magical protection. These groups were later organised by the Defence Minister Hinga Norman of the SLPP government in 1996 into unified militia, close to the government. As of 1997, they were trained and deployed in battlefield by private military contractors. The CDF have been attributed killings and violations, although to a lesser extent.
- Further freelance fighting groups joined the violence. Amongst these were a group of jail escapees and army mutineers, that called themselves West-Side Boys. They occupied a strategic highway between Freetown and the provinces. When in 1999 they took British Soldiers as hostages, the resolute response of the British sent a signal that the peace-keeping mission and the military support to Sierra Leone was serious and

that the habitual breaking of peace-agreements by the RUF would no longer be accepted.

- ECOMOG, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group, a multi-lateral regional security initiative of the Economic Community of West African States, got involved in 1997. Largely Nigerian troops, they themselves were lead by a country under dictatorial military regime. ECOMOG has been accused of looting and trading weapons with other factions.⁸ ECOMOG Troops were later integrated in UNAMSIL.
- Private military contractors were hired after 1996 by the government. Amongst the most prominent was South African 'Executive Outcome' who brought a controversial new way of effective bush-war to Sierra Leone.

During the eleven years of war, Sierra Leone became the definition of failed statehood. All public services broke down, protection could not be offered to citizen and 'government' was limited to small fellowships taking power that changed in several times. Only in 1996, elections were organised that gave formal legitimacy to a president.

- In 1992 a coup d'état, lead by a group of young officers, drove president Momoh out of office and formed the National Provisional Ruling Council. Valentine Strasser declared himself president and was initially welcomed by large parts of Freetown's population.

⁸ Comfort Ero 2000, ECOMOG, 'A model for Africa?', in Institute for Security Studies ISS, 'Building Stability in Africa: Challenges for the New Millennium', Monograph 46, Pretoria, February 2000.
<http://www.issafrica.org/pubs/Monographs/No46/Ecomog.html>

- In 1996, elections were held which brought Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the SLPP (back) into power.
- In May 1997 a military coup was staged by Johnny Paul Koroma and his supporters in the army. He soon entered into an agreement with the RUF, which led to a sinister regime of shared resource exploitation, looting and human rights violations. In 1998, with the help of ECOMOG troops, the government of elected president Kabbah could drive the APRC out of town, which was responded by a joined APRC/RUF attack on Freetown in 1999, one of the bloodiest moments of the war.
- With the involvement of the UN peace keeping mission and the support of the Kabbah government by the international community, in 1999 the peace process got on track establishing a process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), the election of a government in 2002, the establishment of a TRC and a Special Court (see below), the support to repatriation and reintegration of refugees lead by UNHCR and the support to economic recovery.

Victims and Perpetrators

The civil war in Sierra Leone inflicted tremendous human suffering on the population. The death toll in the war is probably close to 75.000, 2 million persons have been displaced and 20.000 mutilated.⁹ The war increased morbidity and mortality rates particularly amongst the most vulnerable rural poor. The actual battle-field death is minor in comparison to the burden inflicted by the war-related mal-nutrition and the collapse of health services. It is, however, difficult to identify particular victims of this war: no specific ethnic group was targeted, and no horizontal inequalities were exploited to fuel the war.

The war has caused a tremendous refugee crisis and internal displacement. The below table represents the people fleeing the country, mostly to neighbouring Guinea. It does not reflect the internally displaced persons. It is estimated that more than two thirds of the population was displaced internally.¹⁰

Refugees from Sierra Leone (thousands)

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
253.6	311.2	275.3	379.5	375.1	329.3	406.1	490.0	402.9	179.1

Source UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2001

⁹ Figures from Crimes of War Project www.crimesofwar.org/onnews/news-sierra3.html quoted in Danny Hoffman (2004), 'The Civilian target in Sierra Leone and Liberia: Political Power, Military Strategy, and Humanitarian Intervention', *African Affairs*, 103, 2004.

¹⁰ International Crisis Group (2001), 'Sierra Leone – Time for as New Military and Political Strategy', Freetown/Brussels/London, 11 April 2001, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1491&l=4>.

Women have been targeted systematically with sexual violence. But there have been women fighters as well, particularly amongst the RUF.¹¹ While causing an extraordinary exclusion from all kinds of basic needs and the frequent submission to human rights violation, the war had a modernising effect, when, for example, women were exposed to new types of gender relations in the refugee camps in Guinea. Similarly the long experienced generational power gap became questioned when young fighters challenged the chiefs and set up their own local governance structures.

In the process of reintegration of ex-combatants, a scheme (DDR) was devised that offered cash and employment or training opportunities to those who delivered fire weapons or ammunition. This scheme was criticised as being a reward to perpetrators.¹² This is an ongoing discussion, which needs, however, be qualified by the very nature of the recruitment of combatants which was often involuntarily and by reports that not all fighters could access the scheme. In any case it has been reported that only old weapons have been deposited and the 'hard-core fighters' moved on to Liberia and later to Ivory Coast.

Today in 2006, Sierra Leone keeps being a place in which human development is amongst the lowest on earth. Under five child mortality lies with 296 of 1000 amongst the highest. Life expectancy at birth is at 37 for male and 40 for women. Adult literacy is

29.6 percent.¹³ Just this year, it has moved from the last place of the Human Development Index to second last. Apart of these appalling indicators, it is reported that corruption and crime rates steadily increase. In 2005, Sierra Leone was on place 53 out of 76 of the governance quality ranking of the World Bank's IDA Resource Allocation Index (IRAI).¹⁴

Understanding the Conflict

There are a number of reasons to explain the war, its outbreak and prolongation. There seems to be an emerging consensus that the weakness, respectively injustice and rampant corruption, of both local and national governance has been the root cause. Although external factors, such as the supply with revolutionary ideology and training by Libya or logistic support from Liberia and Burkina Faso, have been necessary ingredients to kick-start and maintain the war, they are in itself no sufficient explanation. Alluvial diamonds – dubbed 'lootable resources', because they can be extracted without significant investment in machinery – have nurtured the war once it had begun and had stabilised it on a highly violent level, leaving previous political motivations often aside.

Domestic processes: Amongst the legacies of colonial rule there is a dual legal and administrative system. Whereas the capital and national affairs were governed by formal rule, the large part of the country has been submitted under a system of customary rule

¹¹ Chris Coulter (2005), 'The Post War Moment: Female Fighters In Sierra Leone', Migration Studies, Working Paper Series #22, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand, <http://migration.wits.ac.za/CoulterWP.pdf>

¹² Sigrid Willibald (2006), 'Does money work? Cash transfers to ex-combatants in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes?', *Disasters*, 2006, 30:3, pp. 316-339. <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.0361-3666.2005.00323.x>

¹³ All data from World Health Organisation 'World Health Statistics 2006'.

¹⁴ See <http://tinyurl.com/pyt8z>.

administered by 'paramount chiefs', elected by selected 'ruling families' for life-long tenure. These 149 Chiefdoms formed what Mahmoud Mamdani analysed as 'decentralised despotism' combining legislative, judicative and executive powers. In that line, the modes of accessing land through the chiefdom institution created a system of very locally confined citizenship, where one would be a son of the soil and obey or risk being an outcast. Additionally, the informally cemented generation gap, which has made the youth the readily exploitable labour force for the elders, nurtured this rural authoritarian control. Richards has documented in detail how marriage rules and access to land via local patrons only created a system of security conditional of chains of patrimonial dependencies. Dowry payment would either indebt the youths and make them quasi-slaves for the family of the bride or would make marriage impossible and expose youths to heavy fines by local courts when 'woman damage' was inflicted by romantic affairs with what is considered as prime asset of the local elites: women.¹⁵ Only later, the work in diamond fields provided an exit-option for those who would be attracted by the day to day gambling to find a gem.

It is mistaken to contrast the institution of chieftaincy as traditional, pre-colonial and modern as they were manipulated by the colonial powers for their system of rule. The Chieftaincy forms part of a modern system of colonial rule, and previous, pre-

colonial mechanisms of checks and balances and social control – which were not paradise either! – were abolished for the sake of extraction and submission. Similarly it is erroneous to conceive these decentralised, traditional structures as independent of the formal, national governance structure later. The paramount chiefs have been engaged as local powerbrokers for national 'big men'. In Sierra Leone this often happened on an ethnic line between the two main ethnic groups. The constitutional provision of a tenth of parliamentary seats to the paramount chiefs is only a formal reflection of this. The actual weight of paramount chiefs in the past and present is not to be overestimated. Hence, traditional and modern, decentralised and national power structures form a comprehensive system.¹⁶ It is in that line, that today many Sierra Leoneans rather look for a reform of the chieftaincy institution combining traditional accountability with modern governance than advocating for its abolition.

External influences: Charles Taylor, Muammar al-Gaddafi and Blaise Compaoré are heads of states that had, at different points in time, a proven involvement in the conflict. The conflict in Liberia was a driving factor in terms of ideological roots, military support and connection to international networks of illicit trade. Whereas the training of local elites, be it ideologically or militarily, had an impact on the formation of the guerrilla groups, however, the taking hold of particularly rural areas answered to a generalised rejection of the existing system. Thus, the TRC concludes that, despite the fact that the war had been influenced by external forces, it was however rooted in domestic factors.¹⁷

¹⁵ Paul Richards (2005), 'To Fight or to Farm? Agrarian Dimensions of the Mano River Conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone)', *African Affairs*, 104:417; P. Richards (2003), 'The Political Economy of Internal Conflict in Sierra Leone', CRU Working Paper 21, The Hague, Clingendael Institute http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2003/20030800_cru_working_paper_21.pdf; for a critique see David Keen (2002), "'Since I am a Dog, Beware my Fangs': Beyond a 'rational violence' framework in the Sierra Leonean War", Crisis States Programme DESTIN, LSE, London www.crisisstates.com/download/wp/WP14DK.pdf ; D. Keen (2005), *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, Oxford.

¹⁶ See the Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2004, Witness to Truth, Freetown, Vol. 2; www.trcsierraleone.org

¹⁷ Sierra Leone TRC Report Vol. 2, pp. 13-14.

War economy: Diamonds were said to fuel the war. The Panel of Experts of the UN meticulously established the linkages between the RUF, the rogue regime of Charles Taylor, international diamond dealers and weapons trade.¹⁸ However, these linkages developed in the course of the war and stabilised the situation on a highly violent level. The riches of diamond trade had been fuelling the patrimonial regimes before, in a pyramidal system of favours and dependencies around the president. Much of the fighting in Sierra Leone was financed by looting on a pay-as-you-go scheme. It is, however, a mistake to interpret the war as a systematic assault on mineral resources with ultimately criminal – not political – motives. Many scholars have argued to take further dynamics than the easily visible and media-exposed more seriously.¹⁹

Options for Western Actors

The main actors in Sierra Leone have been the European Commission, the World Bank and the United Kingdom. To these added a number of bilateral donors, namely the United States, Germany and Italy, and a series of multilateral bodies, be it financial, such as the African Development Bank or the Islamic Development Bank, or non-financial, such as UNHCR and WFP.

¹⁸ Report Of The Panel Of Experts Appointed Pursuant To Un Security Council Resolution 1306 (2000), Paragraph 19 In Relation To Sierra Leone; December 2000 <http://www.sierra-leone.org/panelreport.html>; and: Report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1395 (2002), paragraph 4, in relation to Liberia <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/Liberia2/470e.pdf>

¹⁹ Richards op. cit.; Fanthorpe op. cit.; Keen op. cit.

The panorama in 2004 looked like this

top ten donors of gross ODA (2004-05 average) in USD m

1	EC	75
2	United Kingdom	61
3	IDA/WB	53
4	SAF&ESAF (IMF)	31
5	AfDF	28
6	United States	27
7	Arab Agencies	16
8	Italy	13
9	UNHCR	12
10	Germany	9

Source: OECD/DAC

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/63/27/1878706.gif>

The aid flow per OECD/DAC donor country for the years from 1989-2004 has been as displayed below. The second biggest bilateral donor in 2004 has been China. China, however, does not report to the OECD/DAC statistics²⁰

	1989-93	1994-98	1999-03	2004-05	TOTALES
IDA	63,85	157,95	216,27	90,64	528,71
EC	78,09	134,71	109,94	150,29	473,03
UK	18,8	60,83	245,82	121,52	446,97
US	43	55,19	180,63	51,01	329,83
Italy	151,5	19,08	31,12	25,64	227,34
AfDF	32,25	84,33	39,42	50,29	206,29
Germany	71,41	39,04	48,15	18,01	176,61
Netherlands	5,41	14,71	85,27	16,74	122,13
UNHCR	8,02	5,96	53,49	23,64	91,11
Norway	9,92	14,75	40,03	9,33	74,03
France	18,22	23,15	8,22	7,71	57,30
Japan	25,91	16,08	5,03	2,28	49,30
WFP	11,81	12,02	15,1	10,21	49,14
Canada	2,31	6,6	14,86	10,11	33,88
Switzerland	1,29	3,40	21,43	5,47	31,59
Sweden	1,82	7,95	15,26	5,27	30,30
Arab Agencies	0,81	-0,31	0,63	21,33	22,46
Denmark	8,04	0,85	0,88	1,24	11,01

Data from: www.oecd.org/dac/stats/crs

²⁰ See the reports of the Development Assistance Coordination Office at the Vice-Presidents Office www.daco-sl.org

During the course of the war, it took time for donors to realise that the 'classical' development practice did not longer fit to the complex emergency that successively deteriorated in Sierra Leone. Some agencies promoted a new mode of operation, of which the following features stand out.

- **Whole-of-government approach:** Particularly the British integrated diplomatic, military and development responses. Similarly the UN strove to integrate peace-keeping operations and the work of the agencies. After the recurrent break of peace agreements, the UN and the British deployed a more serious display of force that led the rebel forces to engage in a process of disarmament. Similarly, it was left clear to the government that the heavy donor investment was to be responded domestically by meeting benchmarks of governance and integrity. A particular instrument to tackle the security-development complex was developed by the British by setting up an African Conflict prevention pool that integrated Foreign Office, Defence and DFID funds.²¹
- **Conflict sensitivity:** Many donors started to realise that the goals of poverty reduction and conflict resolutions are not necessarily compatible in the short term and that an assessment of how intervention decrease or increase conflict levels had to be made. For example, CARE developed an approach that tried to inform humanitarian assistance with a transformative understanding of rights that would counteract to the deep-rooted power structures.²²
- **Donor coordination:** headed by the National Commission for Reconstruction Resettlement Rehabilitation NCRRR – one of the few functional domestic institutions heavily controlled by donors and staffed with competent local personnel receiving competitive salaries – weekly coordination meetings and a number of planning matrices were set up. These were replicated at provincial level. This did not, however, prevent a proliferation of projects with diverse modes of delivery between assistance-oriented humanitarianism and capacitating developmentalism and differing standards of community participation, beneficiary contribution and accountability procedures. Hence, beneficiaries got confused and soon developed coping strategies to tell the respective donor what they wanted to hear in order to access relief items. Similarly a geographical discrepancy developed with those communities easier accessible by the scarce and depleted road network being serviced preferentially. At international level, lessons from these coordination mechanisms were later integrated into a proposed methodology of Transitional Results Frameworks, a kind of light post-war PRSP. Joint needs assessment in post-conflict situations prepare the ground for harmonised and aligned interventions before a government is capable to do so.²³

Reconciliation and Transitional Justice

Two transitional institutions – the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court – have been instated to tackle the issues of

²¹ See Jeremy Giner (2004), *Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention Pools – Sierra Leone*, London. www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/dev-committee/ev647sleone.pdf

²² The design of this programme and the reasoning are documented in: Steven Archibald and Paul Richards (2002), 'Seeds and Rights: New Approaches to Post-War Agricultural Rehabilitation in Sierra Leone', *Disasters*, 26:4, pp. 356-367.

²³ See World Bank /UNDG: *Guide to Post-Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNA)*, Washington / New York, 2004; and World Bank /UNDG: *Operational Note on Transitional Result Matrix*, Washington / New York, 2005.

reconciliation and justice. The TRC emerged from a negotiated peace treaty seeking reconciliation and, implicitly, aiming to ensure impunity, whereas the Special Court, initiated by the president and soon supported by parts of the International Community, intended to trial the most prominent perpetrators. Hence, they respectively focussed on prosecution and forgiveness and had, thus, conflicting mandates. These mandates were not reconciled in practice and the two entities largely worked without connecting.

- The **Truth and Reconciliation Commission TRC** (www.trcsierraleone.org) was established in the peace agreement of 1999, negotiated between the government and RUF. It was enacted in 2000 by the President and Parliament. This Act calls the commission to document the human rights violations and issue a set of recommendations to foster reconciliation and prevent the reoccurrence of the civil war. The commission shall address impunity and bring out the voices of both victims and perpetrators. Within the Act, forgiveness and impunity is assured to those collaborating. In October 2004, the 1.500 pages final report was transmitted to the President of Sierra Leone and presented to the United Nations Security Council. Under severe funding constraints, the commission attempted to foster a process of national dialogue. However, it barely reached the rural areas. Furthermore, it was criticised that it imposed a western template of 'forgiveness by truth-telling' that neither was an initiative by victims nor did it match the cultural practices of West-African societies. Cultural practices of reconciliation and forgiveness were largely neglected, the TRC was proposed 'as a standard part of conflict resolution first aid kits', and, even more severe, it was accused to be politically biased.²⁴ When the report was

presented, a list of recommendations was displayed asking for better governance, both nationally and locally, better opportunities for youths, reparations etc. – nothing that had not been said before. In current Sierra Leone politics the TRC report is barely a point of reference, neither for politicians nor for citizens. In a recent report by the Secretary General of the UN it is not even mentioned.²⁵

- The **Special Court on Sierra Leone** (www.sc-sl.org) was established after the peace agreement as a reaction to hostage taking of UN peacekeepers.²⁶ On demand of the Sierra Leone government, the Security Council requested the UN Secretary General to set up a Special Court, a hybrid body both national and international, to try 'those persons who bear the greatest responsibility for the commission of violations of international humanitarian law'. It was established in January 2002 and started working in mid 2002. It finally indicted thirteen persons (all male), five from the RUF, four from the AFRC, three from the CDF and Charles Taylor. The trials were grouped according to armed factions. Given that from a popular perspective, the judicial system in SL is seen as largely flawed, a particular feature of the Special Court is the 'legacy' element that tries to build the capacity of the local judicial system, thus

²⁴ Rosalind Shaw (2005), 'Rethinking Truth and Reconciliation Commissions – Lessons from Sierra Leone', USIP Special Report 130, Washington <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr130.html>; see also P. Douma and J. de Zeeuw (2004), 'From Transitional to Sustainable Justice: Human Rights Assistance to Sierra Leone', Clingendael Conflict Research Unit Policy Brief, 1, Clingendael Conflict Research Unit http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2004/20040800_cru_policy_brief_1.pdf; see also Lydiah Bosire (2006), 'Overpromised, Underdelivered: Transitional Justice in Sub-Saharan Africa', (International Center for Transitional Justice) <http://www.ictj.org/static/Africa/Subsahara/AfricaTJ3.pdf>

²⁵ Report of the Secretary-General on cross-border issues in West Africa, S/2007/143 <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/5189306.html>

²⁶ UN security Council resolution 2000/1315 <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/3685843.html>; See the reports from the UC Berkeley Centre for War Crimes <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~warcrime/SL-Reports>

going beyond the specific court case. Today, the Criminal Court on Sierra Leone has been perceived as a large disappointment, given that the four main representatives of the three warring parties – Foday Sankoh and Sam Bockarie, RUF, Johnny Paul Koroma, AFRC and Hinga Norman CDF - died before the verdict could be issued.²⁷ Today, the only indicted of international relevance and interest is Charles Taylor. The arrest of Charles Taylor was widely applauded in Sierra Leone and all over Africa, thus making a case for African dictators that atrocities will not go with impunity. For security reasons his case has been referred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.²⁸

From the outset it was evident that the International community was more willing to finance the Special Court than the Commission. Whereas the Special Court, conceived half a year later than the TRC, was an attempt of the international community to set standards to avoid impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity *internationally*, the Commission sold itself as a more culturally rooted and closer to the people. There are serious doubts about this claim and this is being underlined by impact it has been generating. As a tool for empowering Sierra Leone citizens neither the TRC nor the Special Court have a good record so far. Prosecuting Charles Taylor, however, might set standards that make their ways in African capitals.

²⁷ Foday Sankoh died on 29 July 2003 in prison awaiting the process. The former battleground commander and link to Liberian president Taylor, Sam 'Masquita' Bockarie, has supposedly been killed. Johnny Paul Koroma is claimed to be found murdered while trying to pass the Sierra Leone Liberian boarder in June 2003. Hinga Norman died on 22 Feb 2007 by post-operative complications; see the notice in IRINnet from the 22.feb.2007 and the Special Report by the Berkeley War Crimes Studies Center from 22 Feb. 2007.

²⁸ International Crisis Group (2003), *The Special Court for Sierra Leone: Promises and Pitfalls of a 'New Model'*, Brussels, London, Freetown <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1803&CFID=14287120&CFTOKEN=39248079>

Aid Programming

Sierra Leone, particularly after 1999, has been swamped by agencies and project approaches. Some of them were implemented by humanitarian actors, others tried to link relief with community-based development, and others started to work with the recovering governmental bodies. Out of these, three similar but distinctive approaches are being presented, considering the programming options for donor aid allocation.²⁹ The selection of these cases is done arbitrarily to illustrate some programming options, other programmes might have been chosen as well.

- The **DFID funded Community Reintegration Project CRP**. An annual volume of 3.3m EUR in 2003. It was particularly focused on integrating ex-combatants, but unlike other programmes that targeted this group exclusively, it intended to achieve a blend of community youths and former fighters on a one-to-one basis and focussed on the rehabilitation of public infrastructure thereby symbolising reconciliation. It aimed to avoid both labelling and favouring former perpetrators. The programme management approach was to work together with locally based NGOs that would provide the services.
- The **Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and Reintegration Programme (ReAct)** implemented by GTZ. A mixed funding by the German Government, UNHCR and DFID had a combined

²⁹ The following information relies mainly on the authors experience and on Simon Arthy (2003), *Ex-Combatant Reintegration – Vol 1&2*; DFID funded Reintegration Activities in Sierra Leone, *Reintegration Lesson Learning and Impact Evaluation*; and, Vol 3., *Key Issues for Policy Makers and Practitioners, Based on Lessons in Sierra Leone*, Freetown/London (Study commissioned by DFID).

annual volume of 5m EUR in 2002, providing thereby a flexible pooling-mechanism for in-country coordination of various donors. Similarly as the above programme, this project aimed to integrate ex-combatants. The focus was, however, on integrated recovery assistance to heavily destroyed communities, thereby both limiting geographical coverage in favour of a concentrated assistance in some villages and spreading the benefits from particular groups (refugees or ex-combatants) to the community as such. This increased the cost per beneficiary significantly. Another feature was the high emphasis on training, be it the training of local implementing partners, technical skills training, community planning and reconciliation workshops, improvement of agricultural practices or micro-enterprise formation. Whereas this approach can claim to be 'empowering' by working on social transformation rather than assistance, it significantly increases the indirect costs of programme management, i.e. the cost of staff etc. as opposed to those values that are transferred directly to the beneficiaries. Furthermore, and similarly to the above programme, ownership – be it at national level or below – was questionable, where coordination with government was poor and nearly all managerial positions were occupied by Europeans.³⁰

- The funding mechanism of **NACSA – the National Commission for Social Action** (www.nacsa-sl.org). Promoted mainly by the World Bank with support of

the AfDB, NaCSA was established as a Social Fund in November 2001. It succeeded to the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR). With an annual volume of 20m EUR in 2004, it is a ring-fenced multi-donor fund administered by an independent commission. NACSA bypasses the national government by applying three different procedures: (1) a demand-driven window, (2) a supply-driven window of public works and a (3) micro-credit scheme. The first window follows practices of Community Driven Development (CDD) whereby communities have direct access to funds to undertake social development projects. NACSA is a quick and efficient mechanism to disburse. The empowering character, particularly of the poor, can be disputed: Although procedures are set out clearly and remain stable over time, the administrative processes exclude the illiterate and the foreseen training and sensitisation exercises are not reflected in staffing. However, being a mechanism, that is instated over a long period as a social fund, assistance from NACSA is being established as a stable entitlement – whereas the above programmes would move on, the opportunity to apply persists and may create social mobilisation towards the offer. Furthermore, NACSA has established a very transparent targeting mechanism on national level where the most affected provinces are to profit more than others. NACSA has been criticised for installing parallel structures to government services and, thus, preventing the development of state capacity. Thus, the relation to the second biggest programme of IDA – the support to decentralisation and the capacity building of local administration – remained largely undefined.³¹

³⁰ The GTZ ReACT programme approach has been documented by M. H. MacDonald (2006), 'Post Conflict Reconstruction and Private Sector Development', Case Study, GTZ Programme for Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and Reintegration Activities in Sierra Leone (ReAct) [GTZ, Sector Project Innovative Tools for Private Sector Development] http://www2.gtz.de/wbf/doc/PSD_reconstruction_Sierra_Leone_0406.pdf ; Ulrich Alff (Editor), Regine Koppow, Marion Miketta, Helge Rieper, Annette Wulf, Review of the GTZ Reintegration Programme in War-Affected Rural Communities in Sierra Leone. Berlin, 2001 <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/series/sle/194/PDF/194.pdf>

³¹ For a general introduction into this default model of community driven development in post-conflict settings, see World

The analytical framework of this study seeks to identify 'empowering' characteristic of donor approaches. The above programmes show a number of trade-off in programming options. Whereas targeted assistance for reintegration of ex-combatants might create feelings of rejection, the models of de-linking disarmament and demobilisation from the reintegration component in either mixed targeting (CRP) or integrated community responses (ReACT) seem to offer answers. Choices have to be made between (1) achieving coverage and impact (cost-per beneficiary), (2) between supplying and capacitating (direct vs. indirect cost) and (3) between rapid disbursement mechanisms and stable institutionalisation of demand-driven funding (project vs. long-term social fund). Ultimately, these are the programming options that reflect back on the beneficiaries. Additionally, project procedures and staff attitudes have to consider the targeting of the most vulnerable and the prevention of elite capture. Given the context of corruption, the culture of silence and abuse of power, it is of paramount importance that programmes are accountable on communal level. Various devices, such as town meetings, written memoranda of understanding and internal M&E functions that are responsive to community concerns make this function a reality. Moreover, ensuring integrity on programme management level in the disbursement of funds remains a noteworthy challenge, in which necessary control efforts represent a further administrative and financial burden and frequently hamper the timeliness of delivery.

Bank, *Community-Driven Development in the Context of Conflict-Affected Countries: Challenges and Opportunities*, Washington, 20 June 2006, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCDD/Resources/CDD_and_Conflict.pdf?&resourceurlname=CDD_and_Conflict.pdf and the documentation of the World Bank Workshop on Social Funds in LICUS Contexts, 26 April 2005. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALPROTECTION/EXTSF/0,,contentMDK:21011893~menuPK:396420~pagePK:64020865~piPK:51164185~theSitePK:396378,00.html>

Learning from Sierra Leone?

The case of Sierra Leone as post-conflict aid programming and conflict resolution experience has gained particular importance in donor discourse that supersedes the actual size of the country. Although Sierra Leone had long been on the last place of the Human Development Index and media coverage has exposed the extreme brutalities of its civil war, the population size of not merely six million, puts its relevance for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in perspective, compared with an overall Sub-Saharan population of 750 million. That is not to say that intervention and aid allocation had not been justified and utterly necessary. Rather it is argued that the prominent place, it has been given as a laboratory, needs to be adjusted to the particularities of a rather small country with distinct historic trajectory, restricted to the political dynamics of a rather small polity and its transferability treated with downright cautiousness. Amongst the reasons for the relevance Sierra Leone gathered as a case beyond its own right figures the following:

- The display of extreme violence and the respective media coverage made Sierra Leone an icon for two secular debates in the 90s dubbed 'greed vs. grievance' on the one hand and 'the rise of new barbarism' on the other. The greed vs. grievance debate explored the motives for the 'new wars' (Duffield) in either globally integrated economic terms ('blood diamonds' in the Sierra Leone case) or political resistance to a legacy of unfair statehood (destroying the post-colonial state). The new barbarism (Kaplan) debate, claiming societal

disintegration in the periphery, proved as another rather short-lived attempt to interpret the post-cold war new order.

- The successful integration of military and development intervention seemed to prove the viability of setting the objectives for external action as high as facilitating 'regime change'. Scholars argue that the Sierra Leone experience might have contributed to secure British commitment to join the coalition of the willing to invade Iraq.³²
- After the disinterest in African issues and the rampant failures in Somalia and Rwanda in the early nineties, Sierra Leone was a test-field for a new kind of intervention in Africa exploring modes of heavy UN peacekeeping commitment, later summarised in the Brahimi report, and bilateral and multilateral interventions focussed on whole-of-government responses on state-building beyond projected development cooperation.
- Pacifying remote areas became even more urgent in the wake of the post-September11 world when ungoverned territories were identified as safe-havens of terrorists menacing the West. In the concrete case of Sierra Leone, Al Qaeda financing and money laundering was suspected to be linked to the diamond and weapons trade channelled through Liberia.³³

³² See for example the justification of ten year foreign policy by Tony Blair: 'I think we can be proud of the interventions we have made,' he said. 'In removing the dictatorships that we have from Sierra Leone, from Kosovo, from Afghanistan and Iraq, yes, I believe the world is a better place, for the removal of those dictators.', in 'Blair: We should be proud of Iraq role' The Guardian, Thursday February 22, 2007 <http://www.politics.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,329723591-111381,00.html>

³³ Douglas Farah, 'Al Qaeda Cash Tied to Diamond Trade, Sale of Gems from Sierra Leone; Rebels Raised Millions, Sources Say.' The Washington Post, Nov. 2, 2001; and Global Witness (2003): *The Usual Suspects - Liberia's Weapons and Mercenaries in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone: Why it's Still Possible, How it Works and How to Break the Trend*, London; Annex VIII: President Charles Taylor and Possible Links to Terrorism. http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_detail.php/96/en/the_usual_suspects

The framework of this case study aims to understand options for donors to promote 'empowerment' in post-conflict settings. The aforementioned dimensions tended to over-blow the Sierra Leone case as a success story with ample options to transfer 'lessons-learned'. Contrary to these extrapolations, this study insists in some very specific historical trajectories of Sierra Leone and describe the intermingling of donor actions into local processes as well as into the global process.

Collateral Damages

One of the main issues that fostered an enormous ineffectiveness and, in effect, a disempowerment of many vulnerable groups was the crude negligence of local circumstances, an outright clash of African local realities with Western headquarter-based recipes, and . Social empowerment was too often perceived as a technocratic process in which five hundred year of western history was to be injected in a fast-forward mode without any consideration of the local context. When it came to reporting and programming, output-oriented, easily measurable interventions, namely food and seed distribution and infrastructure projects were always prioritised against slower projects that took social transformative methods as their approach.

In detail, amongst the adverse effects of donor involvement were the following:

- **Media coverage and feedback in military strategies:** Danny Hoffman argues that the encounter between globalised humanitarian actors and local understanding of the execution of power might actually have exacerbated the techniques of

warfare, concretely the targeting of civilians by the putting into scene of extreme violence as spectacle. Fighters on the both sides were aware and, in interviews, made frequently reference on media coverage of the conflict, and on any other conflict in Africa. The necessity of Northern NGOs to attract funding and the sensational coverage of 'tribal wars' might have led to the perception that the more violation against civilians are perpetrated the more attention – read: resource allocation – was given to the country, and to particular groups, such as ex-combatants, in particular. This intermingled with the cultural pattern of 'big-men-ship' where power has to be publicly displayed. Whereas big-men would ask for obedience and contribution, they could offer patronage and protection. Maiming their subjects, hence, turned into a direct manner to ridicule the power of the big man.³⁴ The weird linkages between the local and the global are also reflected in the cultural consumption and its appropriation by the fighting youths. Richards documents the role of the first Rambo movie in the identity building of fighters. Similarly, western codes, mostly copied from New York Bronx Rap-music videos reappeared in the RUF self-depiction and war-names took Disney movies as source of inspiration. The CDF choose a more 'tribal' code, which was not less oriented towards external media coverage.³⁵

- **Naïve imagination of community power structures:** Most programmes set-up community-based management structures in utter negligence of the actual power structures on the ground. 'The community' was imagined as power-free,

harmonious universe. 'Community Development Committees' were to develop plans and prioritise, organise local support to project implementation by providing local material and labour and serve as a general interface between the Western Agencies and the local populace. Often these structures were quickly overtaken by the usual elites, and controlled by the chiefs. Projects ran in difficulties when youths would refuse to be conscripted to voluntary labour, because this – unpaid exploitation – was exactly the pattern that led to the war. 'Community farms' were being rehabilitated by food security programmes disregarding any kind of difficulties for access to land for the less privileged. Even more, because white expatriate staff barely had time to step out of their four-by-fours, they preferred agricultural sites for rehabilitation that was easily accessible and close to the communities – frequently the land of the local elites. Rehabilitation of feeder roads – a tedious work – profited most to those who actually were in need of market access, and was barely understood by those who survived from subsistence agriculture.³⁶

- **Stability vs. justice:** When as of 1999 the peace agreement seemed to be stabilising, foreign donors – particularly the UK DFID – started thinking about reinstating order locally. A 'Chieftaincy Recovery Programme' was conceived, that did exactly what the title promised, although participative elements – such as broad-based consultations – were included. Whereas in 1999, under the complete discomposure of any governance structure, this attempt, to start building up stability from down below, might have been

³⁴ Danny Hoffman (2004), 'The Civilian target in Sierra Leone and Liberia: Political Power, Military Strategy, and Humanitarian Intervention', *African Affairs*, 103, 2004.

³⁵ See Paul Richards (1996), *op. cit.*

³⁶ Mind the title of the RUF manifesto 1995: 'footpath (sic!) to democracy'. The negligence about local community structures in aid-programming has been discussed by Archibald and Richards (2002), *op. cit.*; Richards (2005), *op. cit.*; Fanthorpe (2001), *op. cit.*

justified, the programme was continued when the fighting stopped and when the discontent with the 'traditional rule' was widely aired and its legitimacy more and more questioned.³⁷

- **Brain drain and poaching-off elites:** Most of the Freetown elites could flee into other countries, thus exacerbating the brain drain. The influx of international organisations, be it non-governmental, bilateral or multilateral, through their employment strategy skimmed off the most capable staff from state entities be it central government departments or even schools and health clinics. Only lately, one programme organised by the African Diaspora – SEEDA – tries to link up the Sierra Leone exile community with local business to increase their capacities and attract investment.³⁸

These are some of the adverse effects on the capabilities of the victims of the war that post-conflict aid activities brought with them. Some of them could have been avoided by greater sensitivity on the side-effects of aid delivery, some of them are consciously taken trade-offs against other goals. As main lessons emerges the need for (1) context specific power and politics analyses, (2) rapid translation into operational procedures in a highly volatile post-conflict context, and (3) the sharing and aligning of approaches and the coordination of between agencies. Much of this comes down to institutional elements of aid delivery, namely the delegation to country offices, the space given to in-country staff to engage in political analysis, and the fostered attitudes of country-office leadership to coordinate amongst donors.

³⁷ Fanthorpe (2005), op. cit.

³⁸ AFFORD's SEEDA Supporting Entrepreneurs and Enterprise Development in Africa, <http://www.afford-uk.org/services/news/viewnews/index.asp?id=1585,0,2,0,0,0>

Looking Ahead

Empowerment is a concept that, beyond economic growth, seeks to include greater opportunities and wider choices for people to enjoy decent livelihoods. Beyond capacities of individual, these choices are realised in interplay between an organised society and an effective and legitimate state. Inclusive citizenship is a condition of and result for state-building. The very notion of citizen endowed with rights has been absent in Sierra Leone not only during the civil war, not only in the post-colonial state but reaches back into the pre-colonial warrior societies and its petrification into 'customary rule' by British rule. Post-conflict humanitarian assistance by a multitude of NGOs, aid linking relief to development by bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies and early institution-building attempts mostly driven by the World Bank, DFID and the European Commission all claimed, in their way, to have a 'rights-based approach'. Transformative aid, however, that would have linked the urgently needed immediate assistance with a reconfiguration of the rules of the game and would have shifted power to the subjects, often got milled up in petty coordination and ill-informed standard procedures.

There seem to be two promising avenues on which the difficult linking of state-building and immediate service provision could be pursued.

- **Legal empowerment:** The legal pluralism between formal law and 'traditional' customary rule has been identified as one of the causes of the grievances that lead to the war. There are very many programmes that try to foster judicial reform. Very often, they finally end up reconstructing court houses and training judges – activities that remain on a very institutional level, far from the poor. A

new paradigm develops where the concepts of rights is being mainstreamed in community-based development approaches and people are empowered by paralegal assistance to either get access to the formal justice system or make the informal means of mitigation more just and accountable. By these means the '*rural despotism*' is tentatively replaced by new mechanisms of checks and balances that are, however, not necessarily similar to Western models of dispute settlement. One of these projects has been implemented in Sierra Leone by the Open Society Initiative.³⁹

- **Fiscal literacy:** For many years Sierra Leonean have gotten used to chains of patrimonial dependencies where 'protection' was exchanged against submission and contribution of levies. Although these informal patrimonial dependencies do provide security – ultimately they inhibit social development. In contrast to formal taxation, that might constitute a social contract based on rights, informal protection by 'big men' creates a dead-end road that stabilises human capabilities and economic opportunities on a low level. In today's Sierra Leone, there is a movement towards monitoring the budgetary performance and the integrity of the public sector in order to make budget execution more transparent and budget allocation more pro-poor.⁴⁰ Wards are the basic

administrative units foreseen in the 2004 Local Government Act⁴¹. One provision is that decentralised government budgets are being displayed at ward level. This mechanism could develop into a linkage between societal mobilisation and administrative delivery.⁴²

These two examples for an empowering approach of citizens, promoted by smart donorship, illustrate that the agendas of poverty reduction and state building necessarily overlap. Departing from the project mode of bypassing the state, there is a twin movement to both strengthen the demand side of governance – legal empowerment, fiscal literacy and other rights-based approaches – and strengthening state effectiveness, responsiveness and legitimacy. The state speaks a number of languages – laws, budgets and legitimate force are the most common. Donors will have to engage in these languages when they want to contribute to the shift from subjects to citizens – a shift that West-Africa has been waiting for a long time. Globalisation – the access to information – is a main driver of this development. Some youths and women, exposed to new practices and information in refugee camps, by a vast number of , will no longer accept the submission under patrimonial networks and inter-generational dependencies. For many others, though, the short term dependent security will remain the only option. Aid that fosters examples where rights and entitlements supersede, power and personal rule, will make the difference to encourage the latter to join the former. In that light, striving for

³⁹ Vivek Maru (2006), '*Between Law and Society: Paralegals and the Provision of Justice Services in Sierra Leone and Worldwide*', *Yale Journal of International Law*, 31; http://www.yale.edu/yjil/PDFs/vol_31/Maru.pdf ; On the concept of legal empowerment see Steven Golub (2003), '*Beyond Rule of Law Orthodoxy: The Legal Empowerment Alternative*', Rule of Law Series Working Papers No. 41, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C. [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP)] <http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/wp41.pdf>

⁴⁰ Sonia-Magba Bu-Buakei Jabbi and Salia Kpaka (2007), '*Reconstruction National Integrity System Survey*', [TIRI report] London / Freetown http://www.tiri.org/dmdocuments/RNISS_Sierra_Leone.pdf

⁴¹ Local Government Act 2004 <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2004-1p.pdf>

⁴² On the concept of Fiscal literacy and civil society action on budgets see Mark Robinson (2006), '*Budget Analysis and Policy Advocacy: The Role of Non-Governmental Public Action*', Working Paper no. 279, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/wp/wp279.pdf>; see also the International Budget Project www.internationalbudget.org

'stability' might as well be interpreted as fostering conflict, whereby insisting on transparent, rule-based dealings in access to livelihoods – a huge societal transformation – might be the better long-term peace-building strategy, although it smells confrontational in the first place.

Conclusion

Today, proper governance is still an imperative, unfulfilled objective in Sierra Leone. Corruption remains rampant and no culture of tolerance or inclusion in political discourse has yet emerged. Many ex-combatants testified that the conditions that caused them to join the conflict persist in the country and, if given the opportunity, they would fight again. Yet, distressingly, the Commission did not detect any sense of urgency among public officials to respond to the myriad challenges facing the country. Indeed, the perception within civil society and the international community is that all efforts at designing and implementing meaningful intervention programmes, such as the National Recovery Strategy, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) or 'Vision 2025', are driven by donors rather than the national government. This is lamentable.

(Sierra Leone TRC, Final Report - Witness to Truth, Vol. 2, p.12)

In the light of these words, in Sierra Leone 'empowerment' rather seems to be a process that has to be 'gained' from inside, that has to be struggled for in a movement that could be dubbed as 'de-

clientelisation' or 'moving from subjects to citizens'. Outside interventions, for a long time, ignored the domestic political economy and the deeply entrenched dependencies and patrimonial power constellations between local chiefs and national political elites. Although the new development paradigm of comprehensive development frameworks seeks to provide for spaces for 'participation', these invited spaces are not being claimed. On the other hand there are instances of locally based resistance, where particularly youths do not accept anymore the corrupt pre-war practices.⁴³ In order to understand these processes of local organisation, donors have to leave their capital-based offices and get involved with the actual informal institutions that actually determine the access to justice, land rights, marriage rules, mutual labour and participation in decision-making. There are some international development organisations that start to have a more historical approach to institution-building. They go beyond the mere transfer of organisational blueprints with procedural manuals and get engaged with longer-term processes of political development that are informed by thorough political economy analyses about the informal power structures. In the Sierra Leone case, these are an in-depth understanding of the working of the chieftaincy system and its linkages to both rural livelihoods and national politics.

⁴³ Fanthorpe (2005), op. cit.

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