

**Promoting the Consolidation of Peace through Indigenous  
Reconciliation and Social Justice in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone**

*... 'A Blessed Nation' ...*

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**Certification**

I certify that this thesis titled “Promoting the Consolidation of Peace through Indigeneous Reconciliation and Social Justice in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone“ was writtten by Charles B.P. Lahai of the European University Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (EPU), Stadtschlaining/Burg, Austria under my supervision. I guarantee the authenticity of the research work carried out and acknowledge the facts and evidences contained in this thesis.

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## **Dedication**

“To God be the Glory, great things He hath done”. I am dedicating this work to God Almighty for giving me the inspiration and passion to work for peace. I am also dedicating it to my late mother, Mrs. Margret Sambonya Lahai, father Mr. Richard Steven Sheku Lahai whose constant intercessions guaranteed the selfless decisions and actions that brought me success.

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## **Aim and structure of the paper**

The topic for this Thesis “Promoting the Consolidation of Peace through Indigenous Reconciliation and Social Justice in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone... A Blessed Nation” is fundamental in building and sustaining a positive and peaceful future for Sierra Leone. It takes into account the high level of destruction the country suffered during the ten years of civil war. It brings out the many violations and abuses of human rights, their causes and means by which human rights can be respected, justice promoted and peace consolidated by both the state and individuals. It recognizes the full legality of the law and how an indigenous method of reconciliation is useful in the promotion and enhancement of peace and social justice in Sierra Leone. The role of specific stakeholders (Youth) in the breakdown of social order is highlighted with accompanying proposals on the way forward.

Essentially, the paper also highlights the major concerns for development in a post-conflict state and desires to be translated into a concrete proposal for the implementation of a post-war development project that will contribute to promote human rights, social justice, and peace through indigenous reconciliation.

Divided into six (6) chapters, it analyses the past and present, the role of major stakeholders e.g, Governments, the United Nations, regional peacekeeping mechanisms, the youth, etc., and provides conclusive recommendations for the way forward.

Chapter 1 presents the map of Sierra Leone showing the political divisions and landscape, a brief history of Sierra Leone with a geo-political background from the pre-colonial era to independence and to the present day and an introduction into the thesis. It gives the objectives, limitations, methodology and scope of the study.

Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the human rights situation in Sierra Leone with emphasis on colonial legacy of independence and inheritance from British colonial rule. It dwells into the problematisation of human rights, peace and social justice with a focus on how human rights were transformed into human wrongs leading to the wrong approach to democracy. It ends with the rule of law and the examples of shameless politics in Sierra Leone since the 1960s.

Chapter 3 talks about the civil war in Sierra Leone, international responses and the evolution of Peace—the Lome Peace Accord and transitional justice systems that seek to end impunity and promote the rule of law.

Chapter 4 highlights the implication of the war on human rights and peace in Sierra Leone, and analyses the current situational trend.

Chapter 5 deals with the promotion of human rights and peace; the role of reconciliation and social justice which forms the basis of the thesis. It gives an in-depth analysis of an indigenous reconciliation concept known as “Tabotsaneh”. The chapter analyses the role of some stakeholders i.e., the youth and civil society and their contributions to conflict transformation for peace building, giving a case study of fundamental youth structures e.g, the Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation (SLYEO).

Chapter 6 provides the strategies and way forward to consolidate peace and promote human rights and social justice, with particular reference on the role of youth and the National Youth Policy of Sierra Leone.

The paper concludes with appendices, a list of sources, references and bibliography.

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## Chapter One

### 1.1. Map of Sierra Leone



Figure 1: Map of Sierra Leone <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Map of Sierra Leone. Source: [www.sierraleone.com](http://www.sierraleone.com) news.com

## 1.2. Summary of historical background of Sierra Leone

The name Sierra Leone came into being just before the turn of the century in 1896. Before that time, it was only the mountainous peninsular which was called Sierra Leone. The British founded a colony there for freed slaves in 1787 and gave the colony its name. For over a century afterwards, it was only this peninsular colony that was known as Sierra Leone, though the area under British control was gradually increased beyond the peninsula within the period (C. Magbaily Fyle, 1981)<sup>2</sup>. The irony about our history is the claim that this colony was founded by the British; simply to imply that our history is not in our own hands. But how can one find something that has already been there?

History reveals that the colony had a lot of contacts especially through trade with its domestic or interior part, what they called the countryside inland. This latter area extended and covered a great distance from the colony, and was referred to as the Sierra Leone hinterland or interior. History affirms that a larger section of this hinterland was added to the colony in 1896 to form Sierra Leone as it is known today (C. Magbaily Fyle, 1981).<sup>3</sup>

The country is situated on the west coast of Africa, totaling 27925 square miles (73326 sq. km) and shares borders with Liberia and Guinea. It is roughly circular in shape, extending from north to south a maximum distance of 210 miles (332 km), and from west to east a distance of about 204 miles (328 km). Bounded on the west and south-west by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the north-west, north and north-east by the Republic of Guinea and on the east and south-east by the Republic of Liberia, there are two main noticeable seasons – the dry season and the wet or rainy season. (Joe A.D. Alie, 1990)<sup>4</sup>. Portuguese traders began to appear on the West African coast in the mid fifteenth century and by this time certain groups had already established themselves firmly in many areas. On the coast were a host of communities whom the Portuguese called the Sapes. Each group tended to be isolated from the others and there was very little internal migration. History reveals that the fear of war and emerging suspicion of people from other groups increased problems of social cohesion and integration within the groups. This situation paved a path for possible

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<sup>2</sup> C. Magbaily Fyle, 1981: The History of Sierra Leone. A Concise introduction, p 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> C. Magbaily Fyle, 1981: The History of Sierra Leone. A Concise introduction, p 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Joe A.D. Ali, 1990: A New History of Sierra Leone, Political geography, Pg. 1

breakdown of traditions and therefore inadvertently affected ethnic diffusion significantly.

The early peoples of Sierra Leone were affected by certain invasions such as the Mane invasions<sup>5</sup>. While some groups were absorbed in the process, others were displaced and new groups formed. Over a long period of time, new communities also came in a rather peaceful manner and settled in various parts of the country. Like the early inhabitants, these later immigrants also at first lived separately and in isolation from others but were later drawn closer together through the growth of trade, provision of western education and medical facilities, improvement in transportation systems, mining, agriculture and migration.

The country is divided into twelve (12) districts in the provincial areas and two (2) in the western area of Freetown categorized into western urban and western rural. There are a total of seventeen (17) ethnic groups.

The country's constitutional development can be traced from as far back as the 1860s. In the 1940s, when civilization began to show itself, and humanity began to be felt, the quest for independence began to be debated among the political leaders. In a critical mind, I would allude that these political leaders had already gained colonial indoctrination and could only therefore do what the master wanted them to do. So this was purely not a move towards political emancipation but rather a move to political tolerance and adherence. On the other side of the coin, one could deduce that such growth was the outcome of a process of adherence, tolerance, submission, guidance and discipline.

A new constitution was drawn by Governor Hubert Stevenson as a path to independence, a step that led to more constitutional changes especially in 1958, which is seen as the springboard to achieving independence.

In 1961, Sierra Leone gained its independence in a ceremony attended by the Duke of Kent, who represented Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II and handed over the country's independence document to Sir Milton Margai (Joe A.D.Ali, 1990)<sup>6</sup>. Sir Milton Margai became the first Prime Minister of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leoneans who enjoyed the superlatively stable and peaceful era of Prime Minister Sir Milton Margai, because he “was neither corrupt

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<sup>5</sup> An invasion led by a group that heeled from the Mali empire

<sup>6</sup> Joe A.D. Ali, 1990: A New History of Sierra Leone.

nor did he make a lavish display of power or status”<sup>7</sup>, holds the opinion that the path to peace and enjoyment of rights became desolate after this regime. Showered with abundant natural endowment, conflict over mineral resources control has thwarted the nation’s blessing into a curse.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sierraleone.org/heroes8.html>.

### 1.3. Introduction

The subject matter of my MA thesis *“Promoting the Consolidation of Peace through Indigenous Reconciliation and Social Justice in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone...’A Blessed Nation’...* is a deliberate attempt to unravel the many misdeeds and misgivings that Sierra Leone has gone through from colonial period to independence. It investigates into the causes of conflict ranging from the violations and denial of human and people’s rights, disregard for the rule of law and the herculean task of promoting peace through the realisation, promotion, protection and fulfilment of fundamental human rights and equitable distribution of national resources.

In this world of today, peace is widely spoken about in almost every part. But how much such peace has been achieved remains a major concern. Mostly, we speak peace but we push for war, we preach love but we inflict hatred.

**‘A Blessed Nation’** is a notion that have influenced my general perception of life and how the tendencies of our selective perceptions as individuals or human beings have *inadvertently* influenced and caused human misery that have resulted to the things that are continuing to befall humanity. It is inadvertent in a sense that I see the chances and possibilities to transform this human misery into a potentially judicious and systemic development pathway which in any case would require the contributions and inputs of all. Via this approach, I believe that Sierra Leone will enjoy the laurels of **“A Blessed Nation”**.

In many of our classroom activities at the European University Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (EPU), many of us were inclined by the fact that our nations are a gift to us and I personally hold the view that diversity exists everywhere. We were a diverse group of students from over 54 countries living in the small town of Stadtchlaining. Our ultimate purpose was to study ‘Peace’. But not withstanding that, we were also desirous to understand as much as possible our cultural differences and perceptions. The lesson I learnt from this reveals that, no one lives, grows and dies in an absolutely enclosed homogenous society. This is because even where our cultures are “static”, yet our (cultural) practices sometimes differ completely from what the others do and how they can be affected by our actions. Within this contextual mindset, the assumption of building my thoughts around this topic is a useful contribution to dichotomise the rhetorical understanding and

relationship between homogenous and/or individualistic western societies and heterogeneous and/or collectivist African societies.

This explains the necessity of peace and social justice using the God-giving potentials that exists and how a nation can secure the needed opportunities and security that will enable it to function.

Sierra Leone is a ‘Blessed Nation’ of Blessed People who share a Blessed socially constructive identity and God-giving resources. If these resources are judiciously managed, it will lead to equitable distribution of social and economic services including power. This is only when we believe that power is human, it is about a person and how that person would want to rule other.

In Africa today, and other parts of the globe, many nations suffer from the route and legacies of colonialism, which in most cases were succeeded by imperialism. I sometimes wonder why we keep referring to the world as a global village even though our understanding about what a village is meant to be remains very clear...a tiny little habitat, a community of people, an isolated or enclosed settlement etc.

The optimism in such perceptions are normally misunderstood and flooded with a deliberate attempt to confuse the minds, thoughts and reasoning powers of a vast number of our society who are merely illiterate. For me, I would want to desist as much as possible from using the word global village to my uncle, aunt, cousin, granny and grandpa in my tiny little village. The reason is that, the period of war had thought them a natural lesson and they have graduated with several phrases that have to be mastered purely for the sake of survival. They are also familiar with other phrases such as “global” which refers to a feeling of extreme hardship or poverty. In their worldview, the local meaning of “global” refers to absolute difficulty in meeting their needs and wellbeing, a feeling of insecurity and no access to services. In several discussions, we seem to all share the same understanding of what a “village” and “global” means.

Although some level of compatibility exists in our defining abilities of the phrases, it continues to build a huge misunderstanding when an attempt is made to shape their understanding to meet the linguistic understanding of a global village.

With a population of less than six million, Sierra Leone is blessed with precious mineral deposits including, diamond, gold, bauxite, rutile, platinum etc. Notwithstanding the presence of these abundant resources, their utilisation and strategic management remains a huge challenge. This has

been influenced by so many factors including civil and political conflicts, endemic system of corruption and globalisation.

While I subscribe that globalisation is a vehicle for conflict, I equally believe that globalisation has existed long before now. It is our understanding that has been shaped into just this exclusive and self-centered intellectual perception that makes us believe that conflict and globalisation can only be defined, explained and managed by the ‘west’ and those classical ‘elites’. This notion is mixed with high level tendencies of inequality that has contributed to promoting indigenous conflicts and undermining the existence of social justice.

These injustices have been fuelled by restrictive tendencies of dependency of smaller nations on bigger nations.

For example, the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Africa accounts largely for the growing conflict in the continent for which Sierra Leone has suffered immensely. As Africa strives to curb the proliferation of SALW, the dependence on bigger nations and other multi-national bodies has resulted to increased international hypocrisy thereby making some rich nations richer and poor nations poorer. Sierra Leone counts among such groups of unfortunate under-developed nations. This struggle for Africa’s development has intensified and has thus paved the path for conflict. If I understand the tenets of globalization well, then I would assert that globalization is an entrenched slavery and should therefore give peace a chance. This concept compares with the definition of globalization as a “term used to describe the changes in societies and the world economies that are the result dramatically increased trade and cultural exchange. In specifically economic contexts, it refers exclusively to the effects of trade, a particular trade liberalization or “free trade” (*Extracted from Dr. Diane Ross’s researched definition of Globalisation, December, 2010*)

The origin of SALW can be traced as far back as in the early 1960s when few struggling regimes directed their efforts on securing country assistance in the form of development finance from bigger organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). However, it is an undisputed fact that while Africa continues to yearn for its development assistance, the so-called IMF and WB have carved their development agenda to suit into what is known as Country Assistance Strategy, with an *official* motive of re-building the economies of such countries that have struggled to gain independence. Notwithstanding this, the objectives of these African countries have not been met as most of these

countries are still struggling and swimming in debts. Eight out of eleven debts are owned by African dictatorship.

In view of this, the IMF and WB imposed a restrictive process in the name of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the 1980s. This “reform” agenda was aimed at ensuring the repayment of debts and the access to country’s strategic minerals deposits. This move instituted more dependence of African countries with particular reference to Sierra Leone on the utilization of their mineral deposits thereby instituting trade liberalization on Africa’s extractive industries.

Debt owed by African nations has increased significantly and has also widened the scope for the spread of conflict and the quest for military aid. Between 1990 and 2005, OXFAM pegs the cost of war in Africa to have been a conservative USD 284 Billion or USD 18 Billion a year<sup>8</sup>. This estimation further stipulates that in 2006, 50% of the world’s high intensity conflict occurred in Africa with Sierra Leone accounting for one of the deadliest conflicts in the sub-region.

My desire to follow this path is two-fold; firstly, from the many challenges I have faced and numerous lessons I have learnt in my intra-personal and inter-personal relationships in our heterogeneous society and secondly, the challenges that Sierra Leone has experienced as a nation and the options that we have to make good the things that sought to divide and deplete our unique constructive identity. By our nature as human beings, we have defiantly failed to accept and take responsibilities of our actions that have caused untold sufferings to others either directly or indirectly.

Implicitly, we may take pleasure in castigating others and criticising them for their ineptitude towards delivering the services that they are mandated by law to deliver, or by their failings to meet the desired needs of those they represent. Sadly, we make no attempt and effort to contribute in the least way to make good, or even better, the things that we criticise. I find it absolutely incomprehensible why we do the things we do that makes our lives extraordinarily difficult.

Sierra Leone is a nation of God-fearing people; a secular state with stronger links of inter-connectedness in ethnic, religious, culture and political affiliations. Its blessedness in natural resources endowment makes me feel the huge global challenges that a small nation with huge mineral deposits is

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<sup>8</sup> BBC Focus on Africa Magazine, January-March 2010, p.12.

bound to face. But is this enough reason(s) why “A Blessed Nation” should degenerate? After eleven years of civil war, should Sierra Leone “lose or regain”?

For the purpose of this thesis, I am restricting myself to exposing the realities, challenges and way forward for “an indigenous approach to promote the consolidation of peace and the promotion of social justice through indigenous reconciliation in a blessed nation that have been brutally battered by eleven years of civil war, that lead to the destruction of its socio-economic and political structures.

The war in Sierra Leone started in March 1991 with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) taking up arms against the ruling All Peoples Congress (APC) regime. Although it was believed that war had started in the minds of people even before its physical commencement, it was attributed to a number of factors including socially destructive interplay of bad governance, systemic corruption, youth unemployment, high levels of illiteracy and other inter-related dimensions of exclusion and marginalisation of young people in decision making and the control and utilisation of valuable mineral resources.

Families were separated, communities, house and property completely burnt down and/or destroyed, human lives sacrificed, youths were used, misused and abused in pursuit of a struggle for power, high incidences of violation of human rights including women and children and the misuse of valuable natural resources.

In April 1992, the APC regime was ousted in a coup organised by young military officers and other ranks. A military government was formed and elections were held in 1996 thus ushering a new political dawn. The Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) took over the reigns of power and a commitment to end the war.

Although several peace accords were signed, including the Abidjan Peace Accord (APA) and the Conakry Peace Plan (CPP), the war finally came to an end with the signing of the Lome Peace Accord (LPA) between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL), i.e., the SLPP and the RUF and witnessed by representatives of the international community, UN, ECOWAS, civil society representative and other stakeholders. All parties agreed to abide by the agreement and to take appropriate steps to implement

its provisions. Key among it was the consolidation of peace and the promotion of the cause of national reconciliation which was supported by the establishment of two transitional justice mechanisms; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL). The mandate of the TRC was to provide a historical record of the conflict and pave the path to peace through several reconciliatory processes. The SCSL sought to address impunity and punish those who bear the greatest responsibility.

The fact of the matter is that even though the TRC and SCSL worked assiduously to meet their objectives, there were potential threats of hatred, dislike, disunity, non-cooperation and abuse of power in almost every sector of public service. International counterparts supported the design of a comprehensive multi-track approach to pave the road to peace with several prescribed methods to promote peace, reconciliation and social justice.

The attempt to promote reconciliation implicitly explains that there is peace, be it fragile or not. What is left for Sierra Leone is the endorsement of the fact that reconciliation is a process and social justice is an outcome. In this regard, everyone has a role to play in the promotion of reconciliation and social justice as a means to facilitate social change.

In one of our EPU class work group discussions<sup>9</sup> on understanding cultures of peace from a large and specific view points, several factors including our values, norms within the human, community, environment and society spectrum that influence our intra-personal and inter-personal relationships, the idea of affecting the self and the other were considered to be ingrained in it. Fundamentally, language plays a crucial role in this aspect; that is to say that teaching other languages and not one's own language limits cultures of peace. We also posited that inclusivity, equal opportunities for growth, development and transformation and the notion of religious fidelity that brings us to the point of seeing the other as I see myself plays an unavoidably integral role. Building a culture of peace relates to working in a culture of non-violence at any given time and it is our utmost responsibility to ensure that our tradition and history are fully recognised and upheld.

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Myler Wilkinson, "Imagining Cultures of Peace: Research methodology, Writing and Praxis," 15 February 08.

We live in a deep orientated, heterogeneous and diverse culture which naturally integrates itself to meet our common ethnic, religious or political demands. The re-building of our broken relationships is our utmost responsibility; it must come from us, it must be rooted in our culture, it must be built on trust, honesty, cooperation, empathy, love, confidence, respect, equity and dignity for all among others. But the primary means to achieve this in a post-conflict state like Sierra Leone is wrapped in our readiness to nurse, grow, nurture and harvest the fruits of reconciliation in order to sustain peace. Our culture is moulded with inter-marriages and other cultural integration practices that uphold our unique nature and guided identity.

The investigation into the underlying theories of reconciliation and social justice from an indigenous perspective was drawn from two community/people-centered approaches that are currently being practiced in Sierra Leone; namely, “**Tabotsaneh**” and “**Fambul Tok.**” Both concepts build on people/community process ownership and how they contribute to building a socially acceptable and just society. This paper will focus more on the Tabotsaneh concept.

#### **1.4. Objective of the study**

The main objective of this study is to promote the consolidation of peace and social justice through indigenous reconciliation in Sierra Leone using the experience of Tabotsaneh as a case study. It seeks to generate grassroots understanding of the fundamental elements of peace, reconciliation and social justice.

#### **1.5. Limitations of the study**

The study was limited by inadequate funding to conduct the research on Reconciliation and Social Justice, timing i.e. training period for the research team to administer questionnaire was compressed into one day, insufficient motor bikes to enable team members to shuttle in between their respective distances led to the hiring of additional motor bikes, and bad roads.

#### **1.6. Methodology**

Questionnaires were printed and administered by trained enumerators in three chiefdoms of Tonkolili district, namely. Malal-Mara, Kholifa Mabang and Yoni chiefdoms.

The process followed structured interviews (SI) and focus group discussions (FGD). Literature reviews from published books, articles and journals, class notes and other sources of information such as newspapers, internet and personal stories and experiences of individuals and groups were used.

#### **1.7. Scope of the study**

Although the questionnaires were administered in the three chiefdoms of Malal-Mara, Kholifa Mabang and Yoni, the study built on the factors that contributed to the breakdown of social order and how it led to the outbreak of the civil war.

## Chapter Two

### 2.1. Analysis of Human Rights situation in Sierra Leone

This section describes and analyses the human rights situation in Sierra Leone and strategies to promote awareness for the respect of human rights in order to ensure national peace and security. It compares with national legislative perspectives on human rights, justice and peace and how these laws have been or have not been upheld thus resulting to conflict. It also explores [in some ways] other concepts and approaches that will help to build and promote an understanding of the subject and create concrete understanding of roles.

Sierra Leone is a small country with a population of approximately 6.2 million people. The country experienced a brutal civil war that devastated its socio-economic structures from March 1991. In February 2002, the war was declared over by the then President, His Excellency, Alhaji Dr. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah who directed his effort to concentrate on post-conflict reconstruction efforts after a long period of increased human rights violations and abuses, disrespect for the rule of law and a breakdown of law and order. The transition from war to peace brought the institutionalisation of transitional justice mechanisms through the establishment of the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), after the signing of a peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

Although the country now enjoys *relative peace*, it is essential that necessary mechanisms are put in place to sustain and promote the peace at all levels. This means that an inclusive effort to transcend conflict and move towards promoting human rights, peace, justice and security, good governance and the rule of law will be an essential step towards sustaining national development and growth. This means that peace in Sierra Leone will be less fragile only if the underlying causes of the war are fully addressed. In this regards, both national and international laws have significant roles to play.

Legislatively, the national government is empowered and mandated (by law) to take all necessary actions to promote the fundamental basic rights of citizens and promote national peace and security. The bill of rights encapsulated in Chapter Three, Act Number Six (6) of Sierra Leone's 1991 national constitution explains the protection of fundamental human rights and freedom of citizens. The national legal standard is designed to recognise

and comply with existing international human rights frameworks which Sierra Leone has signed and in some cases ratified including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), the Convention of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention Against Torture (CAT) among others. It is therefore relevant for the state, civil society and the international community to ensure that citizens are aware of their rights, duties and obligations in a way that will enable them to enjoy, secure and claim such rights when they are or about to be violated.

Human Rights, Peace and Security are very important and controversial aspects in International Law. Human rights, peace and justice are closely interrelated in terms of context and application. International human rights have three fundamental notions; (1) they belong to persons because they are human and not on the basis of race, sex, religion, tribe or otherwise, (2) they are valid internationally and so override any rights that are conferred by national laws and, (3) that International law extends to all individuals. But did Sierra Leoneans enjoy these rights during the brutal civil conflict? Did the pursuit of peace go beyond the pursuit of justice? Or did the pursuit of justice go beyond the pursuit of peace? Did the state play its fundamental role in ensuring security and peace for its citizens?

Judging from the notion of human rights which started with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 otherwise referred to as the 'Soft Law' and was supplemented in 1966 by the two international covenants; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (ICECSR), it is no stretch of the imagination that Sierra Leone has not made a progressive realisation of human rights.

The covenants enforce states responsibility of their implementation and that individuals can hold their governments responsible for any violation in the implementation or non compliance. But did this actually work in practice in the Sierra Leone context? Could this have been a recipe for violence and conflict?

Human rights are a global phenomenon and are those entitlements and freedoms that make our lives satisfying and meaningful<sup>10</sup>. Through its lens, meaningful and satisfying lives is what makes human beings human and makes life worthy, valuable and precious. Human rights have three basic qualities;

**A. *Indivisibility*:** means that human rights are indivisible and inseparable. All rights co-exist; they are interrelated and therefore cannot exist in isolation.

**B. *Inalienability*:** means that human rights are inalienable. We are born with them and therefore we must not be denied them and can therefore not live without them. They are our legitimate rights.

**C. *Universality*:** all human rights are universal meaning they are the same everywhere in the world and so belong to everyone.

Human rights started as far back as 1948 with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and supplemented in 1966 by two international Covenants namely; (1) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and (2) International Covenant of Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

**A. ICCPR:** Civil and political rights are personal rights that enable individuals to live in a society. They include the rights conferred by the state to its citizens. These rights includes; the right to life, the right to freedom of expression, assembly, conscience and association, the right to vote and to be voted for, the right to be protected from arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to own a property, the right to fair trial before a court of law, the right not to be intimidated.

**B. ICESCR:** Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are rights that are to be enjoyed by individuals in a state or community. They include; right to food, right to shelter, right to (employment) work and to be paid a just and fair wage, right to health / healthy environment, right to live within your our culture and to practice your culture and tradition.

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<sup>10</sup> A Green Scenery Publication. Sierra Leone, 2006.

Human beings are born with fundamental rights known as inherent rights. Such rights include the right to life and the right to dignity. The rights to life are inherent and should not be taken away at any cost. These rights clash with some national bodies of law that have not yet abolished the death penalty.

Other rights such as the right to education, right to employment/work and just pay/wage can be acquired by the individual.

Some rights are specific, targeted to meet the needs of certain group of persons. These includes; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

## **2.2. Human rights in Sierra Leone and the legacy of inheritance...A law from British colonial rule**

In western liberal democracy, the western notion was that civil and political rights should be enforced. Socialist states emphasised the economic and social rights. Developing or third world countries such as Sierra Leone generally emphasised the social and cultural rights. Nonetheless, the obligations of human rights have been generated by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), civil society and state interaction.

Sierra Leone inherited its statutory and common law from the British. Human rights situations became more challenging following the country's independence from the British colonial rule in April 1961. Sir Milton Margai, a British educated and well respected personality became a popular leader making every effort to maintain the nation's glorious reputation. After his sudden death in 1964, the turbulence and fight for power became ingrained in national contemporary politics with high levels of political 'PhD syndrome'<sup>11</sup> which is based on a patrimonial system that grew into disregard for human rights, peace, security and the breakdown of law and order by people who are close to power. This situation contributed to the root causes of the war.

In a critical conceptual political analysis of the situation, Kenday S. Kamara, July 11, 2007 stated that,.....

*Following the sudden death in office of the conservative but tolerant Milton Margai in 1964, came the "glamour and increased pomp and pageantry of the office of the Prime Minister" under Albert Margai, who led a government that was "racked by accusations of corruption in high places and of disregard for the interests of significant sectors of the population (<http://www.sierra-leone.org/heroes8.htm>). In 1967, he continued, non-commissioned members of the military were worried that the new independent nation was in the throes of a civil war following the Brigadier Lansana and Colonel Juxton Smith coups. The Lansana coup was seen as a calculated attempt by a Mende-dominated [Mende: one of Sierra Leone's largest ethnic groups from the south and east] military to sustain the nepotistic and ethnically based era of the flamboyant Albert Margai who was reluctant to concede defeat to Siaka Stevens whose A.P.C. party clearly*

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<sup>11</sup> Pull-him-down syndrome: An identity-based politics and patrimonial system.

*won the 1967 elections. The counter coup by Col. Andrew Terrance Juxton-Smith two weeks later also did not last long. The non-commissioned members thus favoured staging another coup against the colonels who then coordinated the return of the exiled Siaka Stevens to power in 1968.*<sup>12</sup>

From this assertion, one could deduce the effect of a long term political instability that necessitated increased violence through coups and counter-coups.

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<sup>12</sup> Kenday S. Kamara, July 11, 2007: Grand Strategy for a Corrupt Sierra Leone. Source: Reuters.com. FACTBOX: Sierra Leone's civil war International Reuters. Accessed October 2007.

### **2.3. Problematizing Human Rights, Peace and Social Justice - Turning Human rights into human wrongs... *A wrong approach to democracy***

In our classroom work at EPU on International Relations, we looked at Democracy as the “Map of Freedom” (Dr. Paul Scott, EPU Classroom lectures, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2007), and further looked at “Democratisation and Development” under two broad categories as follows;

- Freedom without development
- Development without freedom

A move towards democracy and democratisation guarantees total participation and reduces fears and intimidations at all levels. The challenges of democracy in Sierra Leone was undermined by the fact that the people ( citizen’s) did not have the space to decide for themselves and by themselves, and as a result, human rights was turned into human wrongs thus making the citizen’s totally disempowered and disenfranchised. The concept of democracy which is meant to be the “the ability to choose was misdirected. In view of this conceptual understanding, we posited our classroom discussion of democracy to fit into two main underlining factors;

- a) That the world itself is democratic and
- b). That the value of democracy is universal.

But this value system became seriously challenged as a result of the fact that Sierra Leone was turned into a one party state and whether you liked it or not, the people in power determined their own value system. This culminated into a system that could be termed as “ Demon – crazy”.

In comparison with Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom, 1953, who were the first to coin the term “polyarchy”, Robert and Charles opined that polyarchy can perhaps be best seen as a set of institutional arrangements that permits both public position as well as the right to engage in politics. In this vein, polyarchy is not equivalent to democracy but Dahl however gives a list of eight (8) minimum requirements of democracy as follows;

1. Freedom to form and join organisations
2. Freedom of expression
3. Right to vote
4. Eligibility for public office
5. The right of political leaders to compete for support
6. Alternative sources of information
7. Free and fair elections

8. Institutions for making governance politics depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

In view of the above requirements, Sierra Leone was hugely challenged by the fact that it did not fit into these requirements and its human rights records became worrisome. The political space did not encourage participation nor did it make room for inclusion. The demands of President Siaka Stevens became the demands of the country.

A Sierra Leonean born, Keday commented that *“Many [analysts] remember Stevens as the Huey Long of African politics: an avuncular figure, whose folksy pork-barrel deals kept everyone happy, [Stevens] was the architect of the plunge into lawlessness, kleptomania, and social immorality that have undermined the Sierra Leonean political system”*.<sup>13</sup>

The Stevens political era turned out to be a self-imposing moment of ruined statesmanship with no respect for human rights. His self-styled, autocratic, intransigent and do - as - I- say leadership plunged the nation into a total state of backwardness, anarchy and lawlessness.

Stevens led APC government maintained a steady balance from soft power to hard power thus striking a high score of power imbalance. During his regime, the nation’s per capita G.D.P growth declined from 2.5 percent to 0.5 percent in 1960 -1970. State resources were mismanaged, education became a privilege rather than a right, and health facilities were inadequate. The unequal distribution of wealth led to increased structural violence and an increase in bribery and corruption in government departments. “State sponsored corruption manifested by public theft; illicit payment and bribes, and manipulation of access to minerals such as diamonds and other resources defined an era”<sup>14</sup> of misdirected governance, a defunct judiciary and the widespread notion of “who-know-you”. One could argue that ‘State sponsored terrorism’ was introduced during this period when special security officers, known as the Independent Security Unit (ISU), were trained as special security to President Siaka Stevens. This name ISU was later paraphrased by the people as “I Shoot U. The ISU was later transformed into a State Security Division (SSD) by the APC.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.worldviewmagazine.com/issues/fall1999/topstory.html>.

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.gdnet.org/pdf/draft\\_country\\_studies/SierraLeone-DaviesFR.pdf](http://www.gdnet.org/pdf/draft_country_studies/SierraLeone-DaviesFR.pdf)

For over two decades the country was ruined by such statesmanship which climaxed into a one party state system. Citizens, especially young people, struggled to make a [decent] living in a situation of limited or no access to justice for the average man. Political slogans such as “Den say Bailor Barry, U say Davidson Nicol”<sup>15</sup> became widespread.

The one-party ideology of the APC in the 1970s propagated the party slogan of “APC- Live Forever” and instilled a culture of silence and complacency.

Student opposition groups started to emerge with university students leading a student mass movement that enrolled other students from other colleges to express their resentment and frustration over the Siaka Stevens government. Inspired by the philosophy and ideology of the Libyan President, Col. Moammar Gadhafi, the student-led protest began to spill across some parts of the African continent. The student action demanded better and quality education for all, a better standard of living, and judicious utilisation of the country’s natural resources for the benefit of all. The [Stevens] government did not pay attention to the expressed concerns of the students unto his retirement in 1985 and hand-picked a military Brigadier, General Joseph Saidu Momoh to succeed him.

The Momoh led APC government built on the foundation laid by his predecessor [Stevens] and promoted the “AYKUTAY”<sup>16</sup> political ideology. Momoh was nothing more than a ‘puppet’ leader, who for over six years in power as a military officer failed to provide state security. He proved his inability and ineptitude to rule the nation in a radio broadcast to the nation, confessing that “He [had] failed the Nation”, a message which Sierra Leoneans received with shock and disgust.

In March, 1991, a break out of civil war was led by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) on the Momoh government. In April, 1992, Momoh was overthrown by his own soldiers who were sent to the war front to fight and flush out the RUF rebels.

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<sup>15</sup> Stress that financial wealth supersedes education.

<sup>16</sup> An unbeatable political class of a particular ethnic origin

## 2.4. The Rule of Law and the politics of Shame

The absolute disregard for the rule of law in Sierra Leone before and during the war became a cause for concern. The introduction of a one party system was climaxed by the notion of either you are inside or you are outside. But the reality is that understanding the rule of law was merely limited to the political elites and the law interpreters who were themselves part of the system.

Enforcing the rule of law means that the state is the highest authority with three basic elements to ensure: (a) equality before the law, (b) no arbitrary use of power, and (c) protection of fundamental human rights. Fundamentally, the rule of law must ensure that;

- The judicial system effectively protects human rights and democratic principles
- The constitutional and legal arrangement guarantee democratic process in practice
- All military, police and security forces are subject to civilian control (Ref: Dr. Paul Scott, EPU Class Lecture note, 26 July, 2007).

But these principles were neglected by the state and therefore subjected the nation to a one party state where power was in the hands of the ruler and not the ruled. This breakdown in democratisation promoted a lack of participation in governance and exposed the country to a totalitarian system where the rule of law did not exist in practice.

In this state of misguided politics, government decision making was far from being transparent, elected public officials and civil servants were never held accountable for their actions, public interest was outside governments agenda, civil society fell into a political juncture trap, there were no former structures of democracy, the media was neither free nor independent and so could not contribute to democracy, voters cannot freely choose their preferred candidate/party as there were no options or choices and people cannot openly question and discuss official policy without fear.

In essence, civil rights were never upheld, elections and political processes were undermined, governance and corruption issues were trivialised, the media was silent and the rule of law ineffective and participation and representation was never guaranteed.

The misuse of laws by the state, and state authorities taking the law into their own hands led to breaking the scope of legitimising and promoting an

awareness of civic responsibilities. This was fuelled by unlawful detentions and arrests of oppositions of government with the notion that “if you are not for us, you are against us”. For instance, independent journalists, civil activists and students suffered the brunt of this misdemeanour. Peaceful demonstrations and/or public gathering were prohibited and considered a violation of state laws. The Public Order Act of 1965<sup>17</sup> limits freedom of expression and this was used to imprison journalists and other oppositions captioned under Part V, Section (26), (27) and (28) as Defamatory and Seditious Libel, which states: under section (26),.... **“Knowingly publishing a false defamatory libel”**- Any person who maliciously publishes any defamatory matter knowing the same to be false shall be guilty of an offence called libel and liable on conviction to imprisonment for any term not exceeding three years or to a fine not exceeding one thousand Leones<sup>18</sup> or both; under section (27), **“Defamatory libel”**, Any person who maliciously publishes any defamatory matter shall be guilty of an offence called libel and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding seven hundred Leones<sup>19</sup> or to imprisonment for period not exceeding two years or to both such fine and imprisonment. However, this provision contradicts with Chapter Three, the Bill of Rights, which states in Section 25 (1) **“Protection of Freedom of Expression and the Press”** as follows:

*“Except for his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, and for the purpose of this section, the said freedom includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and to impart ideas and information without interference, freedom from interference with his correspondence, freedom to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions, and academic freedom in institutions of learning”*<sup>20</sup>.

However, this section goes on to say that, *“Provided that no person other than the government or any person or body authorised by the President shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever”*.

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<sup>17</sup> Being an Act to Consolidate and Amend the Laws relating to Public Order and came into commencement on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1965 and Assented to in Her Majesty’s name.

<sup>18</sup> Equivalent to one-third of one United States Dollar

<sup>19</sup> Less than a quarter of one United States Dollar

<sup>20</sup> 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone

In actual fact, these laws were interpreted by state officials based on their own terms and therefore promoted a culture of silence and abuse of power by the state. Although the law explains that it is unlawful and a violation of citizen's rights to arrest a person without informing him/her of his/her right to a lawyer, this has been a common practice. In cases of felony, it is the state that provides the accused with a state lawyer, which by common sense is an attempt to strangle the law. The "Paul Kamara" (editor in-chief, For Di People Newspaper) seditious libel case which ended in a prison sentence is an example.

Illegal detentions and excessive delays in court cases have contributed to promoting injustices. By the Sierra Leone law, it is a violation of one's rights to be arrested and taken to court for a period exceeding 72 hours after such arrest without being released or charged to court. However, this law is not fully implemented, as some accused persons have languished in prisons until their death without trial. Such delay of justice lead to denial, and could be simply described as 'justice delayed is justice denied'.

Human rights in this context do not account to be legitimate, and the abuses were being perpetuated mostly by state entities or actors in the name of maintaining public order and national security. This practice undermines the country's relevance within the context of international human rights law and treaties to which it is a signatory. These treaties, though relevant in principle, did not seem applicable within the context of Sierra Leone as a sovereign state. Most Sierra Leoneans believed that the lack of respect for human rights was a major cause of the civil war. One can say that disrespect, violation and abuse of citizens rights 'by the state' is a deliberate effort to violate the set of rules that are expressed by international human rights and international humanitarian laws. When such a situation continues unchecked, it produces a resultant force that inexplicably leads to violence and /or war, as in the case of Sierra Leone

The notion of interdependencies and the consolidation of a human rights discourse transformed national sovereignty in-so-much as there was no positive relationship between the state and the household (civil society). This created a feeling of fear and intimidation among the populace. As affirmed by Daniel LEVY and Natan SZNAIDER, 2006.. "While *states retain most of their sovereign functions, their legitimacy is no longer exclusively conditioned by a contract with the nation, but also by their adherence to a*

*set of nation-transcending human rights ideals*”<sup>21</sup>. They went further to emphasise that “legitimacy is mediated by how willing states are to engage with judicial memories of human rights abuses and their articulation in cosmopolitan legal frames, adding that empirically, we focus on war crime trials and how legal inscriptions of memories of human rights abuses are recasting the jurisdiction of international law”<sup>22</sup>.

This argument relates with several contradictions in the misuse of the law that limits constructive and strategic cultivation of relationships between the state and the household and freedom of expression as evident in Sierra Leone’s Section 25 (1) of the Bill of Rights and Part V, Sections (26), (27) and (28) of the Public Order Act of 1965. These sections have been used by those in power to knock down those they consider to be their ‘enemies’ or otherwise considered to be against their political regime. Most analysts have referred to such practice as the ‘the boss-man or big bra approach to politics’.

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<sup>21</sup> LEVY, Daniel SZNAIDER, Natan: Sovereignty transformed (Article), A Sociology of Human Rights, British Journal of Sociology, December 2006, Vol. 57, Issue 4, p357-676.

<sup>22</sup> LEVY, Daniel SZNAIDER, Natan: Sovereignty transformed (Article), A Sociology of Human Rights, British Journal of Sociology, December 2006, Vol. 57, Issue 4, p357-676.

## Chapter Three

### 3.1. The Civil war in Sierra Leone

#### Background

The war in Sierra Leone started in March 1991 with Corporal Foday Sebana Sankoh, an ex-military corporal in the Sierra Leone Military Force and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) who took up arms to rebel against the Momoh regime and seizing towns/villages in the eastern part of the country near the Liberia border. The war was attributed to a number of factors including socially destructive interplay of bad/poor governance, systemic corruption, inter-related dimensions of exclusion and marginalisation of young people in decision making at all levels and the control and utilisation of valuable mineral resources, especially diamonds. On the youth factor, unemployment and illiteracy levels stood as an alarming factor that fuelled the war. Young people who have no jobs and therefore nothing to lose and are poorly informed (illiteracy), were easily recruited into the rebel force by false promises.

It is noted that employment and literacy in Sierra Leone are amongst the lowest in the world<sup>23</sup>. Recent analysis reveals a percentage rate of about 29 % for women and 45 % for men (UN Report 2010). This overwhelming pressure of poverty coupled with socio-economic and political exclusion of young people led to their involvement and sustained their role as perpetrators and victims of terror during the ten year civil war.

A youth in Sierra Leone commented that.....

*“The oppressive situation of the Sierra Leonean youth coupled with the sense of marginalisation [before the war] opened a window of opportunity for the rebel movement to recruit vast numbers of adolescents and young people at the very start of the civil war, a factor that actually fuelled the conflict” (Freetown adolescent research team report, 2002).<sup>24</sup>*

According to documented sources including “Reuters”, the war was funded partly through illegal trades in diamonds<sup>25</sup>. With both technical and financial support from neighbouring Liberia’s Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), mineral resources of the country were used to

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<sup>23</sup> UNDP Human Development Index 2004

<sup>24</sup> Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone, p.11.

<sup>25</sup> <mhtml:file://G:/SL Matters/FACTBOX Sierra Leone's civil war International Reuters...28.10.2007>

support Cpl. Sankoh and his fighters. The illegal trades in diamonds for arms by the RUF, NPFL led to a global campaign against conflict and blood diamonds<sup>26</sup>.

As the language of war automatically changed, the objective of the revolution switched from eliminating bad governance and fighting for people's liberation into wide spread atrocities, violations and abuses of human rights targeting civilians especially women and children. The RUF then earned a reputation for violation of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity (such as forceful recruitment of child soldiers, rape, murder, extra-judicial killing, looting, mutilation, etc). In the words of Rosemary Foot, "*the language of war has a recognised and intimate relationship with the abuse of a core set of civil and political rights*".<sup>27</sup>

While the RUF intensified its attack on the government, the Sierra Leone Military, which was fighting against the RUF rebels, suffered immense pressure at the hands of the rebels thus leading to an increase in military casualties. The war continued to spread into other parts of the country and the Momoh regime became more unpopular in the early 1990s showcasing the government's inability to win/prosecute the war. War front soldiers felt abandoned and less cared for. Momoh's public declaration of failing the nation and his ineptitude to promote state security led to a protest by the disillusioned military officers from the war front who stormed the capital city to protest against the government for lack of logistical support to soldiers in the war front. This protest led to the overthrow of President Momoh's APC regime thus marking his demise.

Shortly after the overthrow, a government was formed and named the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) led by a twenty-six (26) year old Captain (Cpt.) Valentine E.M.Strasser. The NPRC regime gained international recognition and was supported by the international community to end the war with the RUF. Although the government of the APC had gone, this did not stop the RUF onslaught.

While this effort of ending the war by the NPRC was in progress, it (NPRC) experienced a palace coup (internal coup), which overthrew Cpt. Strasser and brought in Brigadier (Brg). Julius Maada Bio as Chairman/head of the

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<sup>26</sup> Diamonds extracted/mined from conflict zones

<sup>27</sup> FOOT, Rosemary- Article on Human rights in conflict (Abstract). Survival; Autumn 2006, Vol.48 Issue 3, p109-126

NPRC. Maada Bio took the process forward and invited the RUF leader to a negotiating table. The RUF remained uncompromising and wanted to take over power by every means. This was, however, the start of direct engagement with peace talks with the RUF. Maada Bio then led the nation to a multi-party democracy conducting national elections in 1996.

The 1996 elections brought the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) into power. The SLPP, under the leadership of Alhaji Dr. Ahmed Tejan Kabba, took the peace initiative forward and with support from the International Community, the SLPP government instituted a two track approach<sup>28</sup>. But could this have been the smooth road to peace.

Although the need for peace was high, I considered the two track approach as inappropriate to the attainment of peace. This is based on the fact that, in any conflict situation, unarmed civilians are the victims as in the proverb that “when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers”. Such intervention inescapably increases violations of human rights and ostensibly threatens peace.

While the two track approach was in progress, the SLPP was overthrown by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), a group of military officers who allied with the RUF in May, 1997. The country then came under siege with a ‘Sobel’<sup>29</sup> regime for almost one year. ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) through ECOMOG, the military wing of ECOWAS (ECOWAS Monitoring Group), led by Nigeria did everything in its power to reinstate the government of the SLPP which went into exile. However, this did not stop the war. As the war intensified, civil militia groups were formed to complement the government's efforts in fighting the rebels. The RUF took over and occupied the capital city in January 1999 leading to intense fighting between them and the joint force of the Civil Defence Force (CDF), government troops and ECOMOG who later succeeded in repelling the rebels out of the city. While the rebels were on the run out from the city, they committed so many violations and abuses, mostly abducting adolescents and young people.

With increased pressure from civil society, and Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora, the government of the SLPP was forced to sign a peace agreement

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<sup>28</sup> Dialogue with the rebels on the one hand and military action on the other

<sup>29</sup> A government of soldiers and rebels

with the RUF. A civil society consultative conference articulated the views of citizens into position statements from all sectors of society and used them as a lobbying tool for peaceful negotiations<sup>30</sup>. The national consultative process.... “The Road to Peace” is an example of such initiative to promote dialogue and peace.

This action pre-supposes that conflict and human rights violations in the Sierra Leone civil war generated a greater sense and feeling of impunity for legal action through the enforcement of the rules on violators. As expressed in the UDHR, all parties are bound by humanitarian law and any contravention of this law may be universal and can be treated under the legal framework of the UDHR. In this respect, one can strongly argue that all parties to the conflict in Sierra Leone committed atrocities. This was emphasised in the publication of International Reuters who noted that “*other factions also committed atrocities*”<sup>31</sup>. “*In total, some 50,000 people died in the war and many more were injured/amputated and/or displaced*” (International Reuters).

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<sup>30</sup> The Road to Peace: Civil society consultative conference to the peace process

<sup>31</sup> mhtml:file//G:/SL Matters/FACTBOX Sierra Leone’s civil war International Reuters...28.10.2007

### 3.2. International Response and the evolution of peace in Sierra Leone

International response on human rights abuses and violations is an essential factor in all aspects of international law. Human rights are important in international law and are guaranteed by the notions of;

- belonging to persons because they are human; not on the basis of race, sex or otherwise
- beings are valid internationally and therefore override any other rights that are conferred by national laws
- International law extends to individuals

In recognition of this, the UN and the Africa regional body, the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) responded to the Sierra Leone civil war using the legal and humanitarian principles as follows;

#### a). The United Nations (UN) Principles/ Mechanisms

The establishment of the UN in 1945 sought to bring equality among nations, which meant that all colonised countries would have been freed from colonialism and external aggression. But this did not happen until Africans started fighting for freedom and against external rule.

The Universal Declaration for Human Rights is the principal mechanism for the maintenance of peace and security. Within its Charter, it guarantees fundamental rights and freedom, such as;

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood<sup>32</sup>
- All human beings have equal protection against any discrimination in violation of the declaration<sup>33</sup>
- Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by competent tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him or her by the constitution or by law. This encompasses national and regional mechanisms.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1

<sup>33</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 7

<sup>34</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 8

The UN Charter is the basic constitutional document of the international community and a multilateral treaty that obligates member states to uphold and respect its framework.

International humanitarian law and international human rights law are two principles that are applicable to states. Human rights laws are applicable during times of peace as well as war. Human rights law is universal such as the UDHR, the ICCPR, and ICESCR or regional, such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR). Violations prohibited by both humanitarian and human rights laws are included in these provisions.

The UN Security Council encourages the Africa regional body to do everything in its powers to address local disputes peacefully before referring them to the Security Council (SC). The UN Charter also stresses in article 52(4) that the application of articles 34 and 35 of its charter relating to the role of the SC and the General Assembly (GA) remains unaffected. The SC holds and reinforces its powers of supremacy in Article 53(1), which stipulates that “while the council may, where appropriate, utilise such regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority, no enforcement action shall be taken without the authorisation of the Security Council”. Article 24 provides that the SC possesses the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

#### **b). Africa Regional Principles and Mechanisms: OAU / ECOWAS.**

In the past, African regional standards suffered from the legacy of colonial boundaries, ideological differences amongst states, policy of non-interference / state sovereignty and the practice of neighbouring states sponsoring insurgents. The OAU was established in 1963 and geared towards addressing these fundamental issues. The objective of the OAU is to consolidate African unity and to preserve peace and security in the continent. All members of the OAU are signatories to the ACHPR, which mandates the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACommHPR)<sup>35</sup> to promote and protect the rights enshrined therein.

ECOWAS was initially established in 1975 to strengthen economic relations and solidarity among its 16 member states. The treaty was revised in 1991 to accelerate regional integration and to meet the new security challenges facing it. Within its treaty provisions, human rights are protected, peace and

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<sup>35</sup> Established in Article 30 of the ACHPR to promote and promote the rights it enshrines.

good relations between states pursued. The general principles of ECOWAS include:

- Equality, solidarity and cooperation among states
- Non-aggression
- Peacekeeping
- Promotion and protection of respect for human rights
- Transparency
- Justice
- Popular participation

ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group) exists as a multi-national force to promote regional peace, security and respect for human rights upon the mandate of ECOWAS.

Although the international responses contributed greatly to peace and security in Sierra Leone, they also contributed to prolonging the war and expanding the confidence gap between the warring factions. Double-standards and international hypocrisies contributed to escalation of the war at the expense of defenceless citizens. In other words, those who call themselves conflict managers are normally foreigners and are not always neutral. They have absolute clear interest and in many cases do not consider the implications of “being careful with technological powers”. To address a conflict, it is best practice to listen to both sides of the conflict. Any effort to support one side may jeopardise the confidence building process. At the initial stage, the RUF was considered by the regional body as “rag-tag” boys. In the words of SATYAGRAHA,... “Since truth is one but each of us sees it in different ways – as leaves on the tree, we must accordingly live with irremediable conflicts<sup>36</sup>”. The international community made a mistake by remaining silent in the face of a failed attempt to put an end to violence by imposing the death penalty for twenty-four military officers who served in the AFRC, who were “convicted before a court martial in Freetown for treason and failure to suppress a mutiny”. This issue was raised in the report of the Human Rights Committee’s special rapporteur for new communications that “they were deeply disturbed by the information that Abdul Karim Sesay and 23 others were executed by a firing squad outside Freetown on October 19, 1998”<sup>37</sup>. With regards to its role, neither the UN nor ECOWAS condemned such an act; rather the process was carried out by “Nigerian soldiers of fortune”. The public execution of very senior officers

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<sup>36</sup> Jan Oberg’s Lecture. EPU Summer / June 2007

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.law.wits.ac.za/humanrts/undocs/session64/view839-840-841.htm>.

including Maj. Kula Samba, a highly respected female nurse in the Sierra Leone Military Force did not go down well with most Sierra Leoneans. Such situations limit the autonomy of regional bodies to respond to conflicts within its regional territories..

If there should be an ideal model of human rights integration and enforcement procedures, then the action of the UN can be mirrored as a force to support regional members to act / respond to conflicts without delay or side-taking.

Katarina MANSSON presents a very clear argument in this regard. She said that,...

*“Human rights remain marginalised at both UN Headquarters and in the field. He argues that serious consideration of human rights at both levels is fundamental to give effect to the integration imperative. At the UN Headquarters, it is pivotal that the Security Council resolutions provide express provisions of international human rights law and that DPKO, DPA and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations strengthen cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.*

*In the field, the UN may wish to undertake a comparative review as to which institutional design of peace operations may best further integration. If universal human right is to provide the basis for effective integration at both levels, it is also necessary that the UN member states honor their commitment to strengthen the OHCHR”<sup>38</sup>.*

This argument holds water in the Sierra Leone context. The UN and the West African regional force did not condemn, but rather kept silent on atrocities perpetrated by the state and further supported and worked with the local pro-government Civil Defence Force (CDF), “the Karmajors” which was established and supported by the SLPP under the leadership of the Lt. Chief Sam Hinga Norman, former Deputy Minister of Defence and one-time Captain in the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force. The UN and ECOWAS were also silent when Chief Norman was dishonoured and indicted by the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) as the first accused of the CDF. Norman later died in a hospital in Dakar, Senegal, under the custody of the SCSL as a result of ill-health.

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<sup>38</sup> MANSSON, Katarina. Integration of human rights in peace operations: Is there an ideal model? (Abstract-UN peace operations/Human rights) International Peacekeeping; Dec.2006. Vol. 13 Issue 4, p547-563

Of course, one cannot argue that it was only the RUF that committed war crimes. Both the CDF and RUF were composed of adolescents and young people, most of who [especially from the side of the RUF] were attracted by fickle promises of rich rewards. Thousands of other young people and adolescent children were conscripted and used as sex slaves, porters or used in other forms to perpetuate mayhem. Small Boys Units (SBU) was formed by the RUF with the primary objective of using them as spies on their opponents. These boys, mostly between the ages of seven and eleven and under the influence of hard drugs, were also used as killers; either to lynch or slaughter human beings alive or to carry out summary executions.

But did the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of ex-combatants address the needs of these young people? This is the question that continues to linger in my mind. From interviews conducted with adolescents and youths (both ex-combatants and non-combatants), the situation would be volatile if attention is not given to the needs and concerns of these young people.

In a joint adolescent and youth research conducted in the North and Western regions of Sierra Leone in April - July 2002 by an international and local youth NGOs, young people interviewed expressed that the “unkept promises to youth could lead to further unrest”. The research project for which interviews were conducted was sponsored by the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children in New York. The following local organisations participated in this research: *Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities; Forum for African Women Educationalist; Independent Youth Forum and Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation*. Details of the research can be found in the research report titled: *Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone*, ([www.womenscommission.org](http://www.womenscommission.org)) .

An adolescent boy in the Waterloo Interim Care Center, had this to say:

*“They lied to us that they would give us everything we wanted if we handed in our weapons. They promised us skills training, allowances and jobs, but nothing happened” (Freetown, October 2001).*

By the same token, a formerly aggrieved demobilised adolescent girl commented that,

*“If I knew that this was what life would turn out to be, I would have stayed in the bush” (Peacock Farm, Freetown, October 2001)*

These concerns expressed by ex-combatants signify that although peace has returned to the country, it is crucial that the international community continues to support and urge the government to ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed in all future development plans.

### **c). UN and ECOWAS Mandate**

Following the overthrow of the SLPP government in May 1997, there was increased pressure to return the country to democracy. At the time of the coup, a cell break was led by the AFRC in order to release prisoners including Major (Mj.) Johnny Paul Koroma, who at the time of the overthrow was also at the central Pademba Road prison<sup>39</sup> for charges of an attempted coup. Koroma later became the leader of the AFRC. Most of the prisoners released were conscripted and armed with AK-47s to support the rebellion. This period was the darkest period in the history of the country. The AFRC government did not gain recognition by the international community and so the people of Sierra Leone suffered gross human rights violations, threats and insecurity under their regime.

The UN immediately responded by supporting the action of ECOWAS to close all borders and to impose an economic sanction and embargo. It also supported ECOWAS to take appropriate action to bring the conflict to an end. The OAU mandated ECOWAS to send its troops to Sierra Leone to reinstate the democratically elected government and to later assist in the implementation of a ceasefire. ECOMOG reinstated the government within a period of about one year.

Under SC Resolution 1181 of 13<sup>th</sup> July 1998, the UN sent its first observer mission known as UNOMSIL<sup>40</sup> to accompany ECOMOG troops to Sierra Leone with the mandate to monitor;

- the military and security situation
- the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of former combatants

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<sup>39</sup> Central Prison in Sierra Leone situated in the capital city of Freetown

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone under Security Council Resolution 1181 of July 1998.

- the role of ECOMOG in the provision of security and disarmament processes in secure areas.

The second UN mission was UNAMSIL<sup>41</sup> established under SC Resolution 1270 with a broader mandate. Its duties included;

- to assist the Government in the implementation of the DDR plan
- establish a presence at key locations, including disarmament/reception and demobilisation centres
- ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel
- monitor the ceasefire
- encourage parties to create confidence building mechanisms and support their functioning
- facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance
- support the operations of UN civilian assistance, including the special representatives of the Secretary General and his staff, Human Rights officials and Civil Affairs officials

ECOMOG was re-mandated for peacekeeping duties and re-deployed to all parts of the country. UNOMSIL withdrew following the Lome Peace Accord<sup>42</sup> and the establishment of the UN Peacekeeping forces (UNAMSIL).

Before its re-instatement, the exiled government built stronger propaganda machinery. This strategy ostensibly caused an increase in civilian suffering in the hands of rebels. Civilians behind rebel lines were dubbed as “rebels” resulting in mass killings by the ECOMOG “anti-aircraft Alfa jet”. Civilians were forced by rebels to come out into the street and dance for peace while the anti-air craft is on air raid/ surveillance. For the exiled government propaganda machine, anyone seen on the street was said to be a rebel and had to be shot at if the situation permitted. So civilians became the ultimate target.

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<sup>41</sup> United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone-Security Council Resolution 1270, October 22, 1999

<sup>42</sup> Peace Accord signed between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF

#### **d). The Foundation and Road to Peace**

Civil society and national human rights organisations can play a major role in promoting the consolidation of peace and the promotion human rights and social justice in conflict situations. This is true in the Sierra Leone context. As Anne SMITH puts it, “National human rights institutions have a key role in promoting and protecting human rights. However, [it goes on], [they] have to define and defend their role or space in relation to where they fit in with government and civil society, [which] can create difficulties with respect to their independence and accountability”<sup>43</sup> In April 1999, civil society organisations organised a national consultative conference to the peace process<sup>44</sup>- the road to peace, where representatives from all stakeholders were brought together to chat the way to peace. In addition to this, a human rights communiqué was signed by representatives from government, the RUF, National Forum for Human Rights (NFHR)<sup>45</sup> and the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) under the leadership of Mrs. Mary Robinson.

In July 1999, shortly after the civil society consultative conference, the government (SLPP) and the RUF signed a peace agreement in Lome, Togo under the caption of “Lome Peace Accord”.

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<sup>43</sup> SMITH, Anne. Abstract from an article on the Unique position of national human rights institutions: a mixed blessing?. Human rights Quarterly; Nov.2006, Vol. 28 Issue 4, p904-946.

<sup>44</sup> National Consultative Conference to the Peace Process, 1999- The Road to Peace

<sup>45</sup> A coalition of over 41 human rights and development organisations in Sierra Leone

### **3.3. Transition from war to peace: The Lome Peace Agreement (LPA), 7<sup>TH</sup> July 1999-**

The road to peace was built on the foundation of a peace agreement. The LPA was signed between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and the RUF on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1999 after heavy fighting between the RUF/AFRC and joint government and ECOMOG forces in the capital Freetown in January 1999. Witnessed by representatives of the international community, ECOWAS, UN, civil society representative and other stakeholders, both parties agreed to abide by the agreement and to take appropriate steps to implement its provisions.

The agreement contained some fundamental “give and take” propositions key among them are the following;

i). In order to bring lasting peace to Sierra Leone, the GoSL, shall take appropriate legal steps to grant absolute and free pardon on the RUF leader Cpl. Sankoh for atrocities committed before July 1999<sup>46</sup>.

ii). After the signing of the present agreement, the GoSL shall also grant absolute and free pardon and reprieve to all RUF combatants and collaborators in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives, up to the time of the signing of the present agreement<sup>47</sup>

iii). To consolidate the peace and promote the cause of national reconciliation, the GoSL shall ensure that no official or judicial action is taken against any member of the RUF, ex-AFRC, ex-SLA or CDF in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives as members of those organisations, since March 1991, up to the time of the signing of the present agreement. In addition, legislative and other measures necessary to guarantee immunity to former combatants, exiles and other persons currently outside the country for reasons related to the armed conflict shall be adopted ensuring the full exercise of their civil and political rights, with a view to their reintegration within a framework of full legality<sup>48</sup>

The article grants an amnesty to all perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations committed prior to the signing of the Accord but any such abuse/violations committed after the signing of the Accord are liable for prosecution. Only the leader of the RUF, Cpl. Sankoh was granted an

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<sup>46</sup> Article IX of the Lome Peace Accord of 7<sup>th</sup> July 1999

<sup>47</sup> Article IX of the Lome Peace Accord of 7<sup>th</sup> July 1999

<sup>48</sup> Article IX of the Lome Peace Accord of 7<sup>th</sup> July 1999

absolute pardon. Most analysts argued that combatant's pardon is restricted by the clause "in respect of any thing done by them in pursuit of their objectives, up to the signing of the present agreement". None of the warring parties include human rights abuses as part of their objectives/mandates, but rather extol mass education, good governance and participation in the democratic process. They may, therefore, be liable for prosecution for human rights abuses committed<sup>49</sup>.

If we compare this article to other provisions expressed in the UDHR, under the caption of violation of civil and political rights, economic and social rights and other regional provisions such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, to which the GoSL is a signatory, it is expressible that prosecutorial measures can be taken against the GoSL for human rights violations committed in its name so long as evidence of such violations can be proven.

In addition to the provisions of the LPA, the establishment of three principal institutions was agreed to be put in place as a matter of urgency. These are;

- The Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (CCP)<sup>50</sup>
- The Human Rights Commission (HRC)<sup>51</sup> and
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)<sup>52</sup>

### **3.3.1. Functions of the CCP, HRC and TRC in relation to promoting human rights and consolidating peace**

The mandate and composition of each institution in relation to its relationship with other institutions mandated by the LPA is critical to the institutionalisation of a culture of human rights, social justice and peace.

i). The CCP's mandate was to;

- implement post-conflict programmes that ensure reconciliation and the welfare of all parties to the conflict, especially victims of the war
- monitor implementation/compliance of provisions of the LPA related to national reconciliation and peace
- ensure that existing structures for national reconciliation are operational and adequately resourced.

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<sup>49</sup> Protecting Human Rights under the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in situations of conflict in Africa: A case study of Sierra Leone. March 2000 Report, Banjul, The Gambia, p12.

<sup>50</sup> Composed of two representatives of civil society and one each from the Government, the RUF and the Parliament.

<sup>51</sup> Termed under the LPA as a quasi-judicial national body and to be under the auspice of the CCP and could seek technical and material assistance from the UN High Commission for Human Rights.

<sup>52</sup> Membership of seven commissioners; four to be drawn from a cross section of Sierra Leone's society and three from the international community.

ii). The HRC was mandated to;

- address grievances regarding alleged human rights violations and promote human rights education through out Sierra Leone society, including schools, the media, the police, the military and the religious community.

iii). The TRC was mandated to;

- put together a historical record of the conflict
- provide a forum for both victims and perpetrators of human rights abuses since the beginning of the Sierra Leone conflict in 1991 to tell their stories to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation
- recommend measures for the rehabilitation of victims of human rights abuses.

Although a truce was agreed by all parties of the conflict, it was torn apart in 2000 when 500 UN peacekeepers were held as hostages by the RUF in the eastern part of the country. This enigma threw mixed feelings at all levels and later led to the need to reinforce peacekeepers on the ground. Britain, the former colonial power, sent its forces to help improve the situation and avoid further escalation. With increased pressure from the international community and civil society, the RUF backed down and allowed the deployment of more UN troops in 2001 after the release of the 500 hostages. The international community monitored the ceasefire agreement with keen interest, ensuring the strict implementation of the disarmament process which continued until the official declaration of the end of the war in 2002.

With the official declaration of the end of the war, the GoSL and the UN, through a joint agreement, established the Special Court of Sierra Leone to operate alongside the TRC as transitional justice mechanisms.

### **3.3.2. The Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL)**

After the re-election into power of the SLPP in 2002 under the leadership of Alhaji Dr. Ahmend Tejan Kabba, the government signed an agreement with the UN for the establishment of a hybrid court known as the Special Court of Sierra Leone<sup>53</sup>. The court was established on January 16, 2002 with the

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<sup>53</sup> Established in 2002 as a transitional justice mechanism to trial those who bear the greatest responsibility for violation of humanitarian law and crimes against humanity.

mandate “to end impunity and prosecute persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity committed against the people of Sierra Leone and in the territory of Sierra Leone since November 30, 1996. This includes those leaders who, in committing such crimes, have threatened the establishment of and implementation of the peace process”.

“The court is the first mixed tribunal of its kind, with judges appointed by the UN and Sierra Leone government”. It “is an international body independent of any government or organisation with a staff including Sierra Leoneans and foreigners”.

The SCSL indicted Foday Sankoh, Sam Bockarie and Issa Sesay of the RUF, Johnny Paul Koroma, leader of the AFRC, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, leader of the CDF, and Liberia’s former President, Charles Taylor, among others, as those who bear the greatest responsibility.

“After 22 months in custody, facing charges at the international tribunal set up to try war crimes in Sierra Leone, [the demented Foday Sankoh] ended up as a shadow of his former self”. Foday Sankoh “died [in July 2003] in a Freetown hospital while in the custody of the special UN war crimes for Sierra Leone”<sup>54</sup>

Sam Bockarie was reported dead some where in Liberia and Johnny Paul Koroma’s where-about still remain unknown.

Chief Sam Hinga Norman, like Foday Sankoh, stood as first accused in the CDF case and also died while in the custody of the SCSL in a hospital in Dakar, Senegal in February 2007.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor, was arrested, extradited and handed over for trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague after spending preliminary trials before the Special Court in Sierra Leone<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>55</sup> Charles Taylor was extradited from Nigeria following immense international pressure on the Nigerian government to hand him over to the international tribunal.

## Chapter Four

### 4.1. Implication of the war on human rights and peace in Sierra Leone

The war in Sierra Leone left serious repercussions on the society ranging from the breakdown of law and order to disregard for fundamental human rights. Structural violence was compounded by increased dependency on foreign aid as a means for reconstruction and rehabilitation. The basic fundamental socio-economic and political structures were undermined by the struggle for power. Some of the fundamental structures affected by the conflict included;

#### a). Education

The war conscripted huge number of in-school youths. Schools were burnt down, female students raped (some testified to have been gang raped); others were either maimed or abducted and used as fighters. Schools, (elementary, junior and senior) especially in the rural areas, are barely functioning as there is a lack of scholastic materials, furniture, trained teachers and decent classrooms. Other sectors including vocational institutions, colleges and universities are still challenged with the incessant growing demand for quality education. There is an increase in violence among students and it has been proven that at least six out of every ten students in rural secondary schools are ex-combatants who still carry the scourge of war in their minds. The same apply to urban schools although on a different statistical scale. There is an increase in the rate of violence in Secondary Schools and this has mostly resulted to fighting and burning down of buildings. An example of such incidence is the student riot that ended with the burning down of the Police Stations and the shooting to death of a Junior Secondary School student in Mile 91 in the Tonkolili district, Northern Province.

#### b). Health

Health centers were completely vandalised and burnt down with (health) officers suffering humiliation and loss of life, dignity or pride. The increase in displacement into either displaced or refugee camps exacerbated poor sanitary conditions and contributed to the spread of incidences of malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, sexually transmitted diseases and

infections, and other respiratory infections. Health facilities were limited as most people cannot afford the high cost of drugs and medical fees.

**c). Protection against inhuman and degrading treatment including sexual violence**

Sexual harassment became the order of the day as young girls and women were never protected by all fighting forces. Consequently, women and girls became vulnerable and exposed to immense sexual abuse and gender based violence. Peace keepers were also involved in such scandal in displaced and refugee camps as they were in the position of offering money and relief supplies to displaced women and girls for sex.

As an aftermath, many women and girls suffer intense trauma of sexual enslavement and forced marriages with [ex] combatants.

**d). Livelihood and improved standard of living**

There was wide spread of poverty and unemployment especially among young people who form the majority of the country's population. With limited training opportunities beyond the scope of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), young people's welfare was grossly under-resourced. Those who have managed to acquire some form of training through the DDR<sup>56</sup> can hardly find better jobs, while others have completely lost sight of what the DDR provides. In search of secured livelihoods, the country has suffered an increase in brain-drain as professionals have, and are still plunging into the western world for greener pastures aiming for better rewards for their services.

**e). Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)**

The DDR was introduced to address the situations of ex-combatants. But this process did not adequately address ex-combatant's needs in its truest sense. Most of them were never re-united with their families, neither were they provided with the support package that the DDR promised. Some abducted girls choose to remain with their former "bush husbands" while others have enrolled into commercial sex work, streetism, crime and drug peddling. Some can be found in the mining fields struggling to make a living.

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<sup>56</sup> Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

**f). Displacement and loss of dignity**

Hundreds of Sierra Leonean refugees who were displaced from their original homes are still languishing either in refugee camps or otherwise in other countries. Under the protection of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), most of them relied on opportunities for asylum into other countries like the USA, UK, etc.

For those in neighbouring countries, returning home with little infrastructure, limited availability of social services, and no support to rebuild their lives, would be like a nightmare. They would rather stay and die in another man's country than to return home to live like destitute.

**g). Child protection**

Child protection agencies were challenged by the alarming rate of incidences of child abuse and child labour by the fighting forces. For instance, the RUF and the CDF were known to have recruited child soldiers with no reference to international human rights treaties that seek the protection and welfare of the child. In any armed conflict, children and women must be protected by all parties in the conflict. This was not the case in the Sierra Leone conflict. The CRC<sup>57</sup> aims at setting standards for the protection of children from neglect and abuse they face to varying degrees in all countries everyday. In particular, article 38 of the CRC says that “no child under 15 years of age may take a direct part in wars. There should be no use of children under 15 in combat activity”. This article was grossly violated and therefore led to deprivation and gross abuse of their fundamental and basic rights.

**h). High crime rate**

The war built a huge impact on crime rate which is still continuing to grow steadily in the Sierra Leonean society, especially among young people. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons remains a deterrent to promoting human rights and peace. Young people need more attention so as to re-direct their minds from war to peace. Most adolescents and young people have noted their grievances in a research report published by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children- Precious Resources: Adolescents in the reconstruction of Sierra Leone<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child

<sup>58</sup> It is clear that despite a tenuous peace, the so-called solutions to these problems are bound to explode if special consideration is not given to the welfare of adolescents and young people, a very crucial human resource.

## 4.2. Current situation / trend in Sierra Leone

Since the end of the war, Sierra Leone's recovery effort has been staggering and mainly determined by the international/ donor community. The quest for a culture of human rights and peace cannot be under-estimated. The current trend reflects as follows;

### a). Economic trend

The unemployment rate in the country is very high. The bulk of the unemployed are young people between the ages of 18-35 years. A high percentage of rural people depend on small scale (manual) farming for their survival. The available modern technological facilities are expensive, highly competitive and mostly influenced or controlled by state officials. There is a high level of economic migration, especially among young people, into diamondiferous areas such as Kono and Tongo Field<sup>59</sup>.

A recently signed contract between the Government of Sierra Leone and the African Development Bank (ADB) and other donors led to the (partial) completion of the country's national Hydro-Electric power (Bumbuna Hydro-Electric Power). However, this energy supply is only for some part of Freetown in the Western Area. Electrical energy /power supply can still be said to be inadequate and insufficient in the Western Area. Bo and Kenema, in the South and East are enjoying electricity relatively for most parts of the year but such supplies are also relatively interrupted.

In line with government's food security drive to improve agricultural productivity, food self-sufficiency and job creation in the agricultural sector, government and its international partners such as UNDP are supporting government by funding projects in this direction in all parts of the country.

The country's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) increased by 3.8% in 2000, 5.4% in 2001, 6.3% in 2002, 6.5% in 2003 and 7.4% in 2004. In spite of this steady increase in previous years, the GDP is seeing to be worrying in recent times as it falls below the 7.4 % in 2010 thus making the basic commodities, such as rice (the country's staple food) to be sold at a high cost of over One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Leones (Le: 150,000.00), approximately \$ 40 per 50 Kg bag. The country established an Anti-Corruption Commission to tackle, expose and curb the challenges of corruption in the country. This

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<sup>59</sup> Diamond rich areas in the eastern part of Sierra Leone

initiative is supported by the international community to address pervasive and endemic corruption. Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan noted that “corruption hurts the poor disproportionately - by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government’s ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid”<sup>60</sup>In spite of all this coupled with the African Union (AU) Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, it remains a primary factor for the country’s slow development pace. But like in many other developing nations, corruption can only be curbed or better off minimized if the provisions to meet the needs of the general public are adequately met by governments. Such provisions include; high employment rate, good standard of living, improved security, improved public/private partnerships, good infrastructure, reduced crime rate, reduced foreign debt etc.

Although the government has initiated a housing project in specific areas in the provincial headquarter towns, housing is a key challenge as most Sierra Leoneans cannot afford the huge housing cost. This is coupled with the fact that houses are also rented in US Dollars. Most Sierra Leoneans are living below the poverty line; they live in shackle houses/or slums and even those that are considered to be in the middle class find it difficult to meet the sky-rocketing housing cost. Land acquisition has a limited access. Household savings are generally low and are commonly built on informal savings channels such as “OSUSU”<sup>61</sup>

## **b). Social trend**

### **i. Education**

The literacy rate stands at about 29- 35% for women and between 45 – 50 % for men and is still considered to be one of the lowest on the globe. The primary enrolment rate increased drastically between 2001 and 2003<sup>62</sup> academic year (Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey). In spite of this increase, there is still a significant difference in school attendance between males and females, with females being lower. However, the government of Sierra Leone and other development partners are making continuous strides

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.canadafreepress.com/2004/marinka111904.htm>

<sup>61</sup> Informal means of saving among selected groups of people with each person receiving his/her quota on a rotational basis. Loans are giving to its members on interest.

<sup>62</sup> Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey

to improve the literacy rate in the country through the implementation of various development education projects, including the SABABU Education Project<sup>63</sup> which involves the construction of Primary and Secondary Schools in all the 149 Chiefdoms of the country. The project also includes the provision of school materials, upgrading school laboratories and supporting the training of teachers.

Through the SABABU education project, primary education was declared free in some government supported schools with government supporting every girl child in the East and North that enters Junior Secondary School through the payment of their school fees. This was a giant stride to improve the female school enrolment in these two regions which are rated as the lowest in female school enrolment in the country.

## **ii. Health**

There are only two main government hospitals in the capital city<sup>64</sup> and one in each of the other three regions. Government has, however, made efforts to rehabilitate the country's health facilities including health centres.

There is only one medical college for the training of medical doctors<sup>65</sup> and a School of Nursing<sup>66</sup> located also in the capital city for the training of State Registered Nurses (SRN) and State Enrolled Community Health Nurses (SECHN). There is a Paramedical School<sup>67</sup> in the second capital city that has now been subsumed into the Njala University education system and various private hospitals in the country that also train SRN and SECHN.

The government has recently launched a free health care service for lactating mothers and under fives across the country. The monthly salaries of health workers have also been improved significantly. However, these services continue to be challenged by the lack of adequate supervision and inclusion of those for whom the services are meant.

Access to improved/safe drinking water is limited. According to “UNDP Human Development Index, only 57% of Sierra Leoneans had access to improved drinking water in the year 2000. A large proportion of the Sierra Leonean population lives in the rural setting and depends upon rivers,

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<sup>63</sup> Basic Education Project implemented by the Government of Sierra Leone

<sup>64</sup> Connaught Hospital and Princess Christian Maternity Home (PCMH)

<sup>65</sup> College of Medicine and Allied Health Services (COMAHS)

<sup>66</sup> National School of Nursing (NSN)

<sup>67</sup> Hygiene and Paramedical School

swamps, springs and wells as sources of drinking water”<sup>68</sup>. This has necessitated the construction of dug out wells in rural communities.

Sanitation facilities are equally poor especially in the rural areas where most people use pit latrines, buckets, bush or rivers for the purposes of waste disposals.

### **c. Political**

The country held a general and Presidential election in August 2007. With a participatory multi-party democratic system, there were over seven registered political parties contesting for the elections. In addition, local councils have been re-established and Councilors are elected after every four (4) years by their respective communities. After a period of 32 years, local council election was held again in 2004. Voter education and the registration process was effective and far above average. This process is geared towards ensuring citizen’s participation in the governance and decision-making process. In terms of representation in parliament, candidates are nominated by their respective constituencies and not by their respective political parties. Significantly, the government of Sierra Leone had a relief of its international debts, and with this development, it should have the ability to focus its resources on national development programmes.

Amidst this effort, there has been some incidences of political threats and destabilization including the vandalizing of opposition political party (SLPP) office in Freetown, intimidation, and a feeling of the concept of a “winner takes all”. Opposition party members in parliament are still crying fowl of parliamentary procedures that are not heeded to as well as their concerns that continues to be giving no attention. In a few cases, the opposition party members of parliament have walked out of parliament and have demanded urgent action or investigation into the issues they have raised. This action affected the budget approval debate by parliament which ended with the sole view of the ruling party parliamentarians.

### **d. Security**

The Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) received training from the International Military Advisory Training Team (IMAAT) shortly after the war was declared over. Senior officials in the military are also provided with opportunities for advanced training outside the country. Vehicles were donated to the military by friendly donor countries in order to increase their military operations and to capacitate the institution against

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<sup>68</sup> UNDP Humann Development Index, 2004

aggression. UNAMSIL has also folded its operation in the country with a new structure been established and known as the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). The police and State Security Division personnel are equally receiving intense training and increasing there scope in terms of numbers and logistics. The restoration of national security, good governance and the provision of basic social services to the most vulnerable groups form the basis of Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP), which has now been translated into the three pillars of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

Sierra Leoneans still remain very concerned over the security situation especially in a situation where the police are perceived to be incapable of policing the state. In most cases, the military has been called upon to reinforce the police. A special unit known as Military Assistance to Civil Power (MAC-P) has been designed to support this process.

## Chapter Five

### 5.1. Promoting Human Rights and Peace: The Role of Reconciliation and Social Justice.

Sierra Leone's experience shows that promoting human rights through Peace, reconciliation and social justice is fundamental in building democracy and good governance in Sierra Leone. Human rights, social justice and peace and reconciliation are diverse concepts which mean different things to different peoples and cultures. Ideally, for example, the concepts of peace is two fold; (i) Positive Peace where the basic needs of the people are met, where there is a just and equitable society with mutually beneficial cooperation and mutual learning and (ii) Negative Peace, where the absence of structural, cultural or direct violence has gone through a series of arguments and philosophical propositions. On the other hand, negative peace subjects people merely as passive objects and spectators and therefore restricts their participation or contribution to national development. In short the people have no voice in state governance. Decision making follows a top-bottom approach.

While I posit that peace means different things to different people and relates to culture, origin and worldview, the two concepts of peace: 'positive peace' and 'negative peace'<sup>69</sup> have lent their definitions to fit into this view. Negative peace is perceived to refer to the absence of war or violent conflict (Assefa, 1993); Kekkonen, 1981; Brock-Utne, 1985; Galtung, 1975). Galtung's attempt to provide a more comprehensive definition of peace argues that such a definition must include economic welfare, ecological balance, and the absence of war.<sup>70</sup> However, Stedman (1991) maintain that:

*Peace is understood to exist among people when they are able to meet their basic needs; make informed political, religious/spiritual, socio-economic and cultural decisions regarding their very existence and the sustainability of their society (including their non-human environment). Peace exists when people live in a harmonious relationship with God and among themselves, with their families, neighbors, ancestors and non-human environment. It follows that peace cannot exist without social justice,*

<sup>69</sup> Tandon, 1989; Brock-Utne, 1987.

<sup>70</sup> Adapted from Thomas Mark Turay. ("Peace Research and African Development," n.d) . p249).

*particularly the equitable distribution of power and wealth in a given society and between the countries in the South and the North ( p.369).<sup>71</sup>*

The many arguments about peace have a central focus on people, their environment, state and inter-state relations. Peace in this sense can be seen as a way to deal with contradictions without using any form of violence. It could also be seen as something artificial, not natural because of its constructive and diverse nature, focusing on creating an environment for the satisfaction of life; and not hindering others. It is about cementing and/or narrowing the gap between people, sharing responsibilities, developing concerns and feelings for one another and relating constructively and harmoniously; where no one feels powerful over the other. It is about power relations and fulfilling, respecting and protecting the rights of others. It focuses on empowering people to secure and claim their rights. It is about humanity and empowerment and is a fundamental pre-requisite to unity. This is to say that no one creates peace if that person does not have unity.

Reconciliation institutes a practice of socialisation where acceptable standards to conform to societal and community norms for acceptable behaviour are subsumed into cultures (culturalised systems). It is in this vein that I see peace, reconciliation and social justice as means to facilitate social change in order to achieve national development and unity.

Social justice is a pre-requisite to peace as the pre-requisite for unity is justice. It is impossible to create unity if there is a condition of injustice. It ensures the entitlement of the same (equal) rights and services to all. It is about making sure that the people enjoy their fundamental and basic human rights and that as citizens, there is a generally acceptable minimum standard of public utilities and services among others.

The dimension is that there is always a consequence to every action that we take and the creation of an orderly mechanism in which truth is found and appropriate reward for punishment is given within a rule of law. This is what I consider as critical in underscoring the relevance of social justice in post-conflict state.

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<sup>71</sup> Adapted from Thomas Mark Turay. (“Peace Research and African Development”, n.d. p.249).

## 5.2. The Tabotsaneh Reconciliation Concept... what is it?

Tabotsaneh emerged from an attempt by a youth serving Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), the Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation (SLYEO) to embrace learning from assessing the use of now mainstream approaches to facilitating indigenous participation and development. It is a Temne word ( Temne is one of the largest ethnic group) and its meaning is based on values of sharing and learning, influencing and advising, involvement and not exclusion, imposition, control or authority.

Tabotsaneh literally means a hanging of heads, sitting around in a group and bending forward to listen, speak and guide each other. It establishes a setting in which communication and discussion can be used to make decisions. Our experience with the war reveals that exclusion, marginality and lack of social control are among the major factors that fuelled the conflict. It brought in several attempts for reconciliation and justice. Tabotsaneh was developed as a conflict resolution tool to address these fundamental causes of conflict and social injustices.

Through the lens of Tabotsaneh, standing back from reality to see things from a new angle, and generating new perspectives from it is fundamental in facilitating meaningful participation and social change. It helps communities/people to see their lives in different ways that will lead to a much wider and critical awareness that develops their ability to identify opportunities and choices that were previously unseen. Via this process, it enables people to take their minds into the world and bring the world into their minds.

Because people did not have their own participatory means of knowledge construction, analysis and fundamental decision making, the assumption makes existing participatory approaches as an imposed process of knowledge construction, analysis and decision making. Tabotsaneh also dwells on the way in which information, analysis and decisions are communicated among local people that make it difficult for them to believe and practice the things that they have been accustomed to.

For instance, western models of cognition assumes that knowledge is mediated by language, but Tabotsaneh (and our courses at EPU - on Imagining cultures of Peace and Building peaceful communities)<sup>72</sup> affirms

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<sup>72</sup> Dr. Myler Wilkinson, Ina Curic and Sabin, EPU lectures February 08

within its participatory context and points out that knowledge is non-linguistic, tacit and generated in practice and so not probably amenable to such explicit codification. This is where Tabotsaneh deviates from PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) and identifies PRA to carry flaws not in theory but in practice. This is because the tools used such as matrix ranking are developed according to the values, communication capacities and participatory processes that are themselves politically driven and often based on outside agendas.

While it became apparently clear that marginality was entrenched by the fact that people were not centrally involved in their own development processes due to lack of required skills, and that lack of participatory awareness has also been entrenched due to high level of illiteracy and the restrictive local capacity to organise and negotiate change throughout traditional institutions, these tendencies unfortunately entrenched into a culture of dependence and a wider lack of understanding of rights throughout much of these traditional societies that have denied people access to basic resources and how to influence key decision making. So where is the justice ???????? When a person thinks for others and decides what they should get?

Conflict between youths for example and traditional society in itself failed to modernise and was therefore set to fracture communities and undermine crucial peace building processes. In our course work at EPU, we discussed issues of our precious heritage, looking at the relationship and differences between change and transformation, and how it fits into our community life. We went further to discuss community as a group of people who regardless of diversity of their backgrounds, have been able to accept and transcend their differences, enabling them to communicate effectively and openly and to work together towards goals identified as being for the common good<sup>73</sup>....

In my view, this is one of the main obstacles that face genuine participatory approaches to sustainable peace. It is these issues that Tabotsaneh seeks to respond to through the recognition of indigenous processes of facilitating participation and literacy development based on local values that people can easily relate to and make sense of.

From this, one can see how much humanity has been robbed-off and the chances of indigenous traditions been completely misunderstood and

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<sup>73</sup> Ina Curic and Sabin, EPU classwork 05, ,February 08. Adapted from ‘Preparation and Guidelines for community building’.

deviated from. So while building my interest in promoting this concept, I am also challenged by making a critical analytical judgment of the complementary relationship or maybe positive effect of Tabotsaneh on other indigenous reconciliatory mechanisms such as Fambul Tok. In this way, Tabotsaneh builds a path to conflict resolution and reconciles people by helping them to establish the opportunities to address local economic, social and political injustices for themselves. It is a bottom-top approach that analyses the three main components of participation, namely; compulsory, marginal and spontaneous participations.

So we can see that one concept (Tabotsaneh) leads into the other (Fambul Tok) and these can address issues of what happened, how it happened and why it happened the way it happened and ultimately brings us to the point of unity, where we transcend the conflict by our own willingness, knowledge and passion for the things we believe in. With this, we can then talk about who leads such processes and what mechanisms can be used including trust, forgiveness, honesty, empathy, dignity, pride, cooperation etc in order to make Sierra Leone a blessed nation that ensures the institutionalization of systems that will promote indigenous approaches to reconciliation and social justice.

My investigation into indigenous approaches to consolidate the promotion of peace and social justice has revealed that there is absolute diversity in cultures. But these diversities are entrenched by the recognition of fundamental factors including the desires and aspirations of indigenous people. Indigenous people require the recognition and protection of their status, dignity and pride, fundamental and basic human rights. Therefore both state and non-state actors must ensure that they do not backtrack on it and that there is strict adherence to the fulfillment of these requirements so as to sustain peace and promote social justice.

While the concept of reconciliation builds on clearing up the past and getting into the future (post-violence), indigenous reconciliation is composed of mending relationships taking into consideration how history has shaped broken relationships (as it happened between indigenous and non-indigenous people such as the aborigines in Australia). This process ensures respect for each others culture, religion and traditional beliefs.

During the period of the conceptual development of Tabotsaneh, and how it has affected the lives of grassroots Sierra Leoneans, reconciliation has presented itself as a key tool to community development and empowerment.

But can reconciliation thrive in a situation of latent peace where the needs of the people are not fully met or where amendment of laws e.g. the Public Order Act of 1965, 1961 constitution of Sierra Leone etc still remain as they were even though the wider public continues to cry foul, or where international conventions and treaties are signed by governments and yet remain undomesticated, or worse to say that there are no treaties between government and indigenous people?

How does reconciliation help to forestall future conflicts and heal the wounds of the past?

If Sierra Leone should move from the quagmire of war and promote a positive path to promote peace, reconciliation and social justice, the peace and justice machinery must be very functional at all levels.

Recalling some of the atrocities caused by the civil war in Sierra Leone and judging the retrospective disorder of John who remained haunted by the unforgettable thoughts of his family, one could undoubtedly admit that reconciliation is about first acknowledging that something wrong has occurred, a step is taken to elaborate or find out why it happened the way it happened and that a joint effort or action is taken to address the root cause. John's entire family was destroyed during the civil war in Sierra Leone. Every moment of John's life was challenged by the ugliness of life. John commented.....

*“My family and I were about to go to pray the morning of January 6, 1997, when the rebels entered Freetown,” said John, 18. “We were shocked by the sounds of firing.*

*We didn't know what to do or where to run, so we sought safety by hiding under the bed. After three days we were crying for food, and two of my brothers died. On the very day, the rebels entered our house and commanded us to come out of our hiding place, including my parents. As we got out, they told me to get to bed with my mother.*

*I refused, and they immediately killed my mother and took me outside. They put my hand on a rock and cut it off. When they finished, they burned the house and took my younger sister. I still do not know where she is. Up until now, it makes me sick to think about all this.”(Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 8, 2002)<sup>74</sup>*

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<sup>74</sup> Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone, p.55.

John's anguish exposes some of the extreme violations of human rights and the absence of peace and security during the civil war in Sierra Leone.

But to ensure that John's memory of the war is confined into an action for peace, the process of helping John to free his mind and move into the world of development is an absolute reality. This is what Tabotsaneh seeks to ensure. It is a struggle for "unity, freedom and justice" (as is seen on the Sierra Leone Coat of Arms). In the words of Johan Galtung "A struggle for equi-archy is a struggle for peace (Deep Culture). From this conceptual understanding of reconciliation, peace and social justice, Tabotsaneh is linked with the "Unity-Based Conflict Resolution process. In reality, Tabotsaneh has existed well before the realisation of how powerful it is in dispute settlement. It encourages dialogue and the holding of a tete a' tete or the hanging of heads.

On the other hand, the promotion of justice (social justice) is a fundamental pre-requisite to peace and development. It ensures that people irrespective of their colour, ethnicity or sex must be entitled to the same rights and services accorded to other citizens.

### **5.3. Youth contribution to conflict transformation for peace building in Sierra Leone**

This chapter describes the role of youth and their contribution to peace building in Sierra Leone after a decade of civil war which devastated the country's socio-economic and political structures. It provides details of individual contributions to peace building and how such contributions are useful in sustaining peace in the West African region.

Peace in Sierra Leone is characterized and enhanced by fundamental systems and structures that aim to ensure people's enjoyment of freedom and dignity. It builds on the notions of human and people's rights and how these rights are secured, protected and promoted. Youth are the backbone and an asset to every nation's economic and social development and form a high percentage of the total population of Sierra Leone. In enumerating the contributions of young people to peace building in Sierra Leone, it is essential to relate with the rate at which the basic needs of people are met within a just and equitable society. This aspect of [positive] peace is fundamental in addressing structural, cultural and direct violence in a nation that has suffered from increased violence, with its youth population being caught in the middle as either victims or perpetrators. Youth participation in the conflict led to widespread atrocities, violations and abuses of human rights, and a reputation for disrespect for the rule of law and crimes against humanity. These aspects have been alarming, and the youths' contribution in addressing the violence was significant in facilitating social change and creating a progressive realization of human and people's rights. However, their role in these destructive acts was influenced by their marginalization and exclusion and was directed by the elders.

The contributions of individual- and youth-led organizations to build peace led to significant improvement in the enjoyment of peace in the country. To this end, it is essential to be resolute maintain that there in the need to put in place necessary mechanisms to sustain the process at all levels and to note that peace is not just the absence of war. This is particularly important in building a strategy of exclusivity approach to transcending conflict, and moving towards promoting human rights and security, good governance and the rule of law as an essential step toward sustaining a culture of peace. However, youth contributions at individual and organizational levels in peace building in Sierra Leone can only be sustained if the fundamental

structures underlying the nation's political and socio-economic development are maintained and strengthened by all means.

Youth participation into this process has empirically broadened their understanding of peace building and its central focus on people, their environment, the state and inter-state relations

Peace building, in a situation of violent conflict as it was in Sierra Leone galvanized the collective efforts of dealing with contradictions without any form of violence. The intervention and contributions of young people has been more artificial than natural because of its constructive and diverse nature, which focused on creating an environment for the satisfaction of basic needs, coupled with every consciousness of sustaining life without hindering the progress of others.

To this end, peace building in Sierra Leone was necessitated by the expressed need for dialogue and negotiation in order to bring the conflict to an end. This was characterized by youth-led advocacy and sensitization programmes among the youth constituency and their indigenous communities This need highly influenced a change in the language of war to recognize the need for social integration and love for one another, as expressed by Rosemary Foot, who argued that “the language of war has a recognized and intimate relationship with the abuse of a core set of civil and political rights”<sup>75</sup>.

This section affirms that conflict transformation for peace-building is a structural process. It is structural in a sense that it involves the application of the different stages of transforming conflict into peace as proposed by different scholars whose formulations on the concept of conflict transformation has been very crucial in contemporary peace-building efforts. This process ensures the total involvement, contribution and participation of all key stakeholders irrespective of economic, social or political influences and backgrounds.

The proposition relates with the conflict in Sierra Leone and how it was transformed into peace. With highlights of some bottlenecks, it also points out in brief, the successes of participatory approaches and inclusion of key players in the move to achieve peace. Essentially, it combines the efforts and

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<sup>75</sup> FOOT, Rosemary: Abstract on article on human rights in conflict. *Survival*; Autumn 2006, Vol.48, Issue 3, p.109-126

contributions of civil society and other stakeholders especially the most marginalized and excluded group of people (the youth) in bringing the conflict to an end and promoting peace at all levels.

As mentioned *inter alia*, the conflict in Sierra Leone was attributed to several factors, among them included the socially destructive interplay of bad governance, systemic corruption, inter-related dimensions of exclusion and marginalization of young people in decision-making at all levels and the control and misuse of valuable natural resources.

On the youth factor, unemployment and illiteracy levels stood out as an alarming factor that fuelled the conflict (war). It is noted however that “unemployment in Sierra Leone is amongst the lowest in the world”. (UNDP Human Development Index 2004)

*Taking note* of the argument formulated by Lederach’s work (1997), which serves as one among the several wide-ranging statements of conflict transformation processes, he sees peace building as “a long-term transformation of a war system into a peace system, inspired by the quest for the value of peace and justice, truth and mercy”. “The key dimensions of this process”, he maintained “are changes in personal, structural, relational and cultural aspects of conflict brought about over different time periods (short-, medium- and long-term) and affecting different system levels at different times”.

Lederach’s proposition describes conflict as “incompatible goals” on different levels, including individual, family, group, state, globe etc. In order to act in a peaceful and constructive way, therefore, one needs to have a fair knowledge and understanding of the key components and processes in the conflict.

Lederach proposes some useful tools to deal with conflicts, which includes the following; (*Jorgen Johansen’s lecture, EPU, Fall, 2007*)

**-Tool 1:** looks at the conflict triangle based on the “content/contradictions, attitude and behavior”. This explains that conflict is a complex entity and gives us three possibilities; a). That we can act to change or influence attitudes to be less hostile or hateful, b). We can act to change the behavior to be less violent and c). We can act to transcend the contradiction and help the parties to find new possibilities.

**-Tool 2:** provides the three phases of the conflict and also gives three possibilities to act in a conflict; a). We can act before the violence occurs aiming at preventing violence, b). We can act during the conflict phase and c). We can act after the conflict phase.

**-Tool 3:** gives the three levels within each actor, namely; the Top, Middle and Grassroot and civil society and explains the importance of each level within the conflict.

**-Tool 4:** talks about the number of actors which are always higher than two. Here, some actors are internal, while others are external and have three possibilities to act in a conflict with a number of actors; a). Before, b). During and c). After violence.

In the Sierra Leone context, actions to deal or transform the conflict only started during and continued after the conflict i.e, at the b) and c) levels. Considering that some processes usually fail to adhere or recognize the fundamentals of peace building through conflict transformation and non-violent approaches, peace has remained to be tenuous in such case. In Sierra Leone, the conflict escalated at a crucial point because the need for peace did not recognize social acceptability, recognition and involvement of the major factor, the RUF. The RUF rebels were initially considered to be “ragged-tagged boys by both the government and other external actors”.

As observed by Richards (2004), “it would be hard to imagine a group further from the well-connected, well-funded world of international ‘political Islam’ than the impoverished, ragged-trousered school drop-outs of the RUF. The case, he added, suggests that no war in the South, however small, will now be ignored by the Northern allies”. This assumption led to an escalation of the conflict and created mistrust and lack of confidence in the minds of the rebels for all internal and actors, including the government, the ECOWAS/ECOMOG. It should be noted that the RUF held onto the most economically viable areas of the country, thus engaging in mining of diamonds and trading diamonds for arms. This enabled the movement (RUF), to recruit vast number of adolescents and young people at the very start of the war, a factor which actually fueled the conflict. Transforming the conflict without the inclusion and participation of this major stakeholder would have resulted to a fragile and unsustainable peace.

From this discuss, the parameters of durable peace should be based on neutrality and dialogue as a framework of accord. In dealing with conflict, be it complex or not, it is crucial to maintain a high level of neutrality and avoid criticism and manipulation.

Giving that all players in the conflict at that material time enjoyed fair and equal treatment in order to maintain a fair balance in transforming the conflict for the enjoyment of peace, the process received a high level of participation, inclusion and recognition of the RUF as a major factor to the peace process. This lead to a result oriented outcome.

It is important to note that young people's contribution through awareness raising, sensitization of their grassroots communities and their role in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process was a significant and positive step towards the attainment of peace.

*Aiming at* the collective need for peace in the country, all parties were brought together to discuss the way forward for peace and to ensure commitment to the process making sure that it is sustainable rather than fragile. Civil society actions added more value to the process, as their effort highly influenced the language of war to recognize the need for social integration and love for one another. Foot, explained this (*Article: human rights in conflict, 2006, vol.48, Issue 3, p. 109-126*) that “the language of war has a recognized and intimate relationship with the abuse of a core set of civil and political rights”.

This proposition guarantees that reconciliation for peace building peace is necessary for any society to forge ahead and distributes its resources for the good of all. It suggests that for conflict to be avoided, it is essential to ensure that the necessary socio-economic and political structures are in place to meet the needs of the people. This relates to Stedman's (1991) view about peace as follows:

In view of this, I assert therefore that irrespective of the nature of conflict and its consequences on both victims and perpetrators, the concept of conflict transformation for peace building is a process that brings all parties together to discuss their grievances and unanimously create the space for collective action to restore unity, peace and security for the good of all. It underscores the fact that there is neither a good war, nor a bad peace.

This paper maintains that for conflict to be transformed into a culture of peace, the process must create the space to include all players so as to ensure

a durable and sustainable peace which ensures that contradictions, behaviors and attitudes are dealt with fairly and transparently.

## **5.4. The Role of Civil Society in Conflict Transformation for Reconciliation and Peace building in Sierra Leone**

Civil society plays a fundamental role in conflict transformation for peace building. Its role stretches from neutrality to that of a watch dog. It ensures that the relationship between the household and the state is such that information is vital and useful at all levels. Civil society ensures that the state authorities are accountable to their people and that the people are well informed through regular awareness raising and sensitisation.

### **5.4.1. The Meaning of Civil Society**

The term ‘Civil Society’ refers to an ensemble of non-state organisations, associations and interest groups which, collectively, help to maintain a check on the power of the state and to promote public interest through their own efforts (Ref: Civil society platform, Sierra Leone, February 2010). The power of civil society, unlike that of the state, is derived from a moral force, rather than from law. It is the product of networking and organisation, rather than of constitutions and institutional structures. Civil Society organisations operate in the realm of public life, but they are not political associations or institutions. They are free, associations of individuals and groups which are however differentiated from the private sector by the important fact that they are not-for-profit (i.e. non profit making) organisations. And they are distinguished from political associations by the critical characteristic of being both non-partisan and independent of the state. They do not engage in struggles for state power; nor do they subject themselves to control by government and other apparatuses of the state.

Civil Society organisations are most effective when they are self-reliant, self-governing, autonomous, and free from the corrupting influence of state-power and of the commercial world.

The world of Civil Society is voluntary associational life outside the state and above commercial motives. Civil Society occupies a self-appropriated space, the space of un-coerced human association, characterised by self-governance but directed towards public service.

In the light of this definition of Civil Society, Civil Society organisations exclude the following groups: multinational and indigenous mining and

oil companies; commercial enterprises including associations of contractors, consultants, marketers; state bureaucracy; all levels and arms/branches of government political parties. Civil Society organisation's consist of not-for-profit, non-governmental organisations, as well as independent trade unions. They also include any branch of the media that is non-partisan, not commercialised and free (Ref: Civil Society Platform, February, 2010).

#### **5.4.2. Building peace through Civil Society contribution to promote accountable Governance, Transparency and Curbing Corruption**

Peace building is reflective of fundamental systems within a state or nation. These systems must ensure that good governance and transparency exists in a corrupt free society.

Given these basic characteristics, the role of Civil Society is critical in promoting transparency and accountability in governance and in curbing corruption as well. Through these efforts, peace can be sustained at all levels. Four specific roles which civil society organisations can play in these respects are:

- (a) The role of the supportive advocate and sympathetic partner of state agencies engaged in promoting transparency and combating corruption. The strategy adopted by Civil Society organisations that play primarily this role is that of quiet collaboration with, and public defenders of the actions of, anti corruption state agencies. It is a useful and necessary role but it often leads to much dependence on the state agencies and carries the danger or a risk of making the Civil Society Organisations indistinguishable from the state agencies, and sharing in both their triumphs and their failures. As Novak puts it, “turning to the state is considered a morally inferior, although sometimes necessary, way of proceeding, a falling away from the project of self reliance and self-governance” (Ref: Civil Society Platform, Sierra Leone, February 2010).
- (b) The role of objective monitoring of the processes of promoting transparency and public accountability and combating corruption by state and private-sector agencies. This role demands the possession of the skills of scientific research, monitoring and articulation. It carries the risk of tainting the image of Civil Society organisations that stress

this role in the sense of making them appear partisan, political and destructive, rather than non-partisan, apolitical and constructive. Yet it is a useful and necessary role. Its effective performance depends critically on the existence of a free and independent press.

- (c) The role of an initiator and innovator of Anti-corruption programmes and strategies as well as builder of national integrity systems. This is the highest and most productive role of Civil Society in the crusade for transparency and public accountability. It demands the highest degree of social commitment on the part of members of Civil Society organisations and requires such high level of expenditure that can hardly be mustered by many Civil Society organisations **especially non-governmental organisations.**
  
- (d) The fourth role is a combination of the second and third roles outlined in (b) and (c) above. The two roles are compatible and mutually reinforcing. Roles one and two or one and three are mutually exclusive and contradictory. *(Summary of excerpts from Civil Society Platform, Sierra Leone, February 2010, by Abu A. Brima, Network Movement for Justice and Development)*

## **5.5. Fundamental youth structures and their role in conflict transformation to promote indigenous reconciliation for peace building and social justice in Sierra Leone. A Case study of the Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation (SLYEO)**

### **5.3.1. Background of SLYEO**

#### **Organizational Status**

The Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation (SLYEO) is a National Youth Serving NGO registered with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (registration number MODEP/D3/47/1 – WA /NNGO/151) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The organization was established and formerly launched on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1995.

#### **Vision**

SLYEO envisions a society (Sierra Leone) in which empowered young people meaningfully can contribute to good governance and other developmental activities in the country.

#### **Mission**

SLYEO is a Youth Serving NGO committed to facilitating and coordinating in collaboration with other organizations the full and genuine participation of young people in nation building through capacity building enhancement, networking, advocacy and enterprise development.

#### **Goal:**

##### **A. Organisational**

To serve as an effective organization that best meets the needs of young people through the use of sustainable and Rights Based Approach to youth empowerment by 2010.

##### **B. General**

A sustainable and Rights Based Approach to youth empowerment enhanced in Sierra Leone by 2010.

#### **Operational Areas**

##### **Western Area:**

24 Main Motor Road, Congo Cross, Freetown (Head Office)

##### **Northern Region:**

| Off Ansurul Road, Mile 91

**Southern Region:**

28 Bo Road Gobaru, Pujehun

**Eastern Region:**

20 Nyama Saquee Street, Koidu, Kono

**Goal:**

**A. Organisational**

To serve as an effective organization that best meets the needs of young people through the use of sustainable and Rights Based Approach by 2010.

**B. General**

A sustainable and Rights Based Approach to youth empowerment enhanced in Sierra Leone by 2010.

**SLYEO's Objectives**

1. To advocate for the development and effective implementation of policies that seeks the welfare of young people nationally and internationally e.g. participation of young people in national development programmes.
2. To develop strategic youth and community networks at local, regional, national and international levels for the running of relevant youth development programmes
3. To promote SLYEO's organizational development for greater impact.
4. To facilitate women's empowerment and promote processes that enhances their livelihood and participation in decision-making.
5. To provide training and learning materials for youth in Sierra Leone in literacy, numeracy, human rights, peace building and HIV/AIDs by 2010.
6. To promote Human Rights education among young people so as to enable them facilitate community access to justice in the operational areas.
7. Facilitate community youth groups to develop local capacity to work with District Councils and other service providers to ensure the effective and transparent implementation of the national development plan e.g. PRSP.

8. To develop and promote strategies that will enable young people to engage in profitable economic activities to support their livelihood.

**Beneficiaries (including Age Range)**

Our beneficiaries are young people as defined by the National Youth Policy i.e 15-25 and 26-35 years.

**SLYEO's Programmes**

1. Capacity building /Organization Development (**COD**) Programme
2. Human Rights and Peace Consolidation (**HuRPeC**) Programme
3. Literacy and Enterprise Development (**LED**) Programme.
4. Youth and Decentralization (**YaD**) programme
5. HIV/AIDs and Gender Mainstreaming (**HAGEM**) Programme.

### **5.5.1. A brief account of SLYEO's past experiences**

SLYEO has gained experiences in a number of intervention areas including but not limited to the following;

#### **A). Literacy Development**

This includes the development of literacy models and the training of Literacy Facilitators in order to facilitate an innovative process that relates literacy development to local priorities so that it becomes a useful tool for local people (especially young people) to employ in driving change for themselves. SLYEO has used this understanding of youth issues to work with Government and other partners to ensure that people especially politicians become accountable to their political mandate and seek to secure the interest of young people.

Over the years, SLYEO have implemented projects geared towards instituting political tolerance and citizens participation especially youth and women. We have broadened our intervention model and have developed in collaboration with other partners six (6) levels of literacy based on the knowledge gained from our literacy package. The levels include;

- Legal literacy
- Political literacy
- Institutional literacy
- Economic literacy
- Health literacy
- Environmental literacy

SLYEO provides training for our beneficiaries (Community Literacy Facilitators) in REFLECT methodologies and approaches, social drama and national legislation.

SLYEO plays crucial role in all elections (Presidential, Parliamentary and local council) since 1996 both as observers and monitors and provide useful civic education for young people. SLYEO is a member of the National Elections Watch, a coalition of civil society organizations involved in electoral processes.

These achievements were gained through support from well meaning and like-minded organizations such as the Civil Society Challenge Fund of DFID and Village AiD in the United Kingdom.

### **B). Agriculture**

With support from the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, YAPAD and in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), SLYEO have trained young people in Malal-Mara and Kholifa Mabang in the Tonkolili District, Norther Region of Sierra Leone as village resource people/ local agricultural trainers. With support from UNDP/Ministry of Youth and Sports, SLYEO has implemented a project titled “Youth engagement and job creation in the agriculture sector for 3500 young people in four chiefdoms in Kono and Pujehun districts in the Eastern and Southern Regions of Sierra Leone respectively.

### **C). Peace Building/Consolidation, Civic education and Human Rights**

SLYEO supported young people in its operational areas with the relevant skill in peaceful negotiations for socio-political change that will see their interest and that of their communities drawn into the traditional framework. It is this understanding of youth issues that SLYEO is using to work with Government and other partners to ensure that people especially politicians become accountable to their political mandate and seek to secure the interest of young people (*Political Literacy*).

### **D). Enterprise Development/ Small Business Management**

This has enabled SLYEO to promote enterprise development for local people in order to improve and increase their skills in credit management and savings. Over 40 Credit unions/circles have been established each in Tonkolili, Pujehun, and Kono districts in the North, South and Eastern regions respectively.

### **F). Lobbying and Advocacy**

SLYEO’s lobbying and advocacy programmes are central in all its operational areas. The organization uses social drama, role play, skits and story telling to communicate key messages.

### **G). Strategic Plan.**

SLYEO has a five years strategic plan - **2005-2010**

### **H). Research and mobilization**

SLYEO has a reputation for conducting research and mobilizing young people, including young single mothers (YSM). It has a separate learning circle for YSM (girls who were impregnated by ex-combatants and now carry the single responsibility of caring for their children while at the same

time desirous to be enrolled into the former school system) initially supported by the European Commission (EC) through its partner, Village AiD and the Baring Foundation in the UK.

In collaboration with the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children in New York, SLYEO and other national NGOs led an adolescent and youth led research in two regions in the country (North and West). A report of the research was released in 2002 titled ***“Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone”***. SLYEO led an advocacy mission with four adolescent researchers to the USA to advocate to UN officials, the World Bank, State Department, UNCEF, UNHCR and some US based Universities such as New York University, Georgetown University and a host of other policy makers and institutions to present the findings of the research and advocate for policy change that will support the development and welfare of young people. The process investigated the role of politicians and the DDR in post conflict Sierra Leone. A copy of such report can be found at the women’s commission website.

#### **D). Gender Mainstreaming**

SLYEO’s experience over the years has built upon the recognition of gender issues and as a result, it prioritizes the mainstreaming of gender in all its outlined activities.

## Chapter Six

### 6.1. Strategies and the Way Forward

Peace professionals and scholars have argued that the principles underpinning a culture of peace are in holism, value formation, dialogue, critical empowerment and respect for cultural values and norms. Clement, proposes that “a new positive future has to be based on respect for others, empathy, and an acknowledgement that individuals and groups can generate positive changes, respect for diversity and a commitment to justice, equity and non-violence”.<sup>76</sup> Beside these, there is the value of reconciliation and intercultural/religious respect and understanding (Ozacky-Lazar, Tanada). This is true in the case of Sierra Leone, to which, we may add the values of compassion, forgiveness, interdependence and truth-telling, with some call for a reverence for life and solidarity with the struggle of marginalised nations and peoples as argued by McMaster, Surendra<sup>77</sup>

The consolidation of peace in post-conflict Sierra Leone is a herculean task that requires commitment, dedication to the enforcement of principles and procedures, and recognition of value formation, dialogue, empowerment and reconciliation, along with respect for culture and diversities.

In a bid to accelerate strategies for the way forward, I am proposing the following as an effective approach to achieve the overall objective of this paper;

- a. The government must ensure that it ratifies all human rights treaties it has signed and ensure their fullest implementation without prejudice. The international community must enforce compliance within the framework of international law. All national laws that are obsolete must be repealed and replaced with new and updated ones that represent the interest of all.
  
- b. The provisions of the Lome Peace Accord propose the establishment of key institutions to promote respect for human rights, peace and security. The establishment of these institutions are a step in the right direction. However, the proper functioning of these institutions must be ensured by government. These include;

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<sup>76</sup> Clements, K.P. “Peace education in conflict zones”

<sup>77</sup> Adapted from Swee-Hin Toh- Towards a peaceful pedagogy. Prospects, vol.XXXII, no.1, March 2002.

- The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone which has been set up and empowered to take the necessary steps in promoting and protecting human rights in Sierra Leone,
- The Youth Commission as proposed by the TRC. The Board of Directors and Commissioner have been appointed by government. What remains a concern is the nature of appointment and the experience of members in youth development,
- The Peace Commission as proposed by the TRC. It is essential that the establishment of this institution be supported by government as soon as possible in order to carry out its mandate in promoting and consolidating peace at all levels.

c. The government must ensure that the rule of law is upheld ensuring primarily;

- that the judicial system is effective and efficient enough to protect human rights, democratic values and principles and access to justice
- an effective constitutional and legal set-up that guarantees sound democratic process not just in theory but in practice.
- that all forces (police, military etc) are custodians of the law and this does not guarantee that they are above the law. They must understand that they are subject to civilian control.

d. Government must scale up its effort in introducing human rights and peace education in the school curriculum. This will guarantee the strengthening of existing human rights clinics and peace clubs in secondary schools, vocational institutions, colleges and universities.

e. Government, political parties and civil society must work together towards the realization of an effective system for citizen's participation in the democratic system. In addition, the laws must ensure minority representation (minority views must be as important as that of the majority) as well as constituency party politics and civic rights promoted by all means.

f. Civil society must be more pro-active in the performance of its role. The engagement in civic education/publicity programmes, documenting the human rights situations and serving as a watch dog is absolutely relevance. Civil society must also increase its interaction with the state as this will roll out the relevance of ENCISS.

g. Government must strengthen and support the Independent Media Commission (IMC) to play its role in promoting constructive journalism with free hands rather than threat or intimidation from government or its representatives.... The press must be conscious of its role in responsible and constructive reporting.

h. Government must strengthen and support the implementation of a robust anti-corruption strategy ensuring that elected officials into public offices are held accountable for their misdeeds. This will add meaning to the President’s adage that “there will be no sacred cows in his government”.

i. Government, political parties, civil society and the international community must ensure that necessary modalities are put in place to ensure that free and fair elections are conducted at any given time and that voters are adequately educated on the electoral process. This is especially challenging for the 2010 Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

j. In collaboration with civil society and the international donor community, the government must work assiduously towards the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

k. Government must work towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals taking into consideration its effort in the improvement of social services such as health, education and recreation and making sure that they are accessible and affordable for those outside the scope of the service.

k. Government must ensure the reduction of the high unemployment rate and create jobs for all, especially young people.

l. Government must put in place strict conditions on the exploitation of mineral resources such as diamonds, gold, bauxite, etc. and its control for the benefit of the entire population. Ownership, control and judicious utilization of these resources must be ensured.

m. Civil society and all other political parties must support the new government to live up to its mandate and address the issues at stake in a way that will promote national unity and development. This recommendation is fundamentally relevant in post-conflict development and must be given due attention. Sierra Leoneans must put party politics aside and put the interest of the nation first.....*it doesn’t matter which party you belong to, what matters is your contribution to national development.* Equally so, the

government of the day must be aware that it is a government of the people irrespective of what political party they belong to.

n. Government should consider the integration of African Traditional Methods (ATMs) into the judicial system.

o. Given that the country benefitted from debt relief, the government should focus its resources on national development so as to meet the development needs of its people.

## 6.2. The Role of the Youth

It is important to point out the role of youth in the effort to consolidate peace and promote social justice in Sierra Leone. This underscores the role they played both as victims and perpetrators of the war. It is clear that Sierra Leone cannot move forward without the recognition of the importance of the youth and their collective single responsibility in state transformation.

Out of its less than six million population, over 40% of Sierra Leone's total population falls within the youth bracket. Youth in Sierra Leone is defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years<sup>78</sup>.

Youths were at the centre of the war. Many of them voluntarily joined the rebel force to fight for social and political change. The situation of young people before the war was quite appalling, with little or no provision for their growth and socio-economic development and mostly considered or labelled as a destructive force. People in power used their positions to indoctrinate the youths and use them to achieve their political objectives. The democratic system did not recognise youth participation; but rather, transformed them into passive recipients of the growing system of top-downism. This situation degenerated into chaos and increased level of criminality among them for a survival and secured livelihood. To this end, the relationship between this desperate growing force and their society began to leap into confrontations through anti-social behaviour and a fallen state control. The worldview of the young people became mirrored through the lens and language of war, which made them to respond and/or express their grievances through violence.

Young people's participation in key decision making processes is fundamental to the discussion of state governance and should not be underestimated. It is an inherent rational for building a unity-based system of governance and promoting liberal democracy and development in Sierra Leone which can be characterized by fundamental systems, principles and approaches that enables citizen's involvement in decisions making processes on issues that affects their daily lives.

This conscious move will strengthen and reinforce the capacities and abilities of young people in order to enable them to meet the challenges of post-conflict development. It is therefore essential for government and other policy makers to ensure that youth participation in decision making

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<sup>78</sup> Sierra Leone National Youth Policy, 2003

processes follows a steady path that will galvanize a collective effort in enhancing quality participation in the political and democratic sphere. This reform effort will necessitate a political commitment to positive change that will inculcate a transparent and accountable practice within national/state/government institutions.

A lot has been said by governments, civil society, national and international non-governmental organizations about youth empowerment through inclusion and participatory decision-making; but these proposals are not compatible to the existing nature and investment outcomes for the youth to take their rightful role in society. This is so because of the lack of conscious effort to build consensus to meet and/or address the interest of young people as well as ensuring their representation in key decision making processes. If the National Youth Commission is to gain relevance in the discharge of its duty, then it must be empowered by government and its international partners to fulfill its mandate fully.

Many promises have been made by past and present governments, but the reality is that these promises are yet to be met. This portion is therefore dedicated to the youth and thus seeks to dichotomize youth participation in key decision making process in Sierra Leone and probes further into the breakdown of social order that has been highly influenced by politicians and inevitably resulting into their role as perpetrators and victims of violence.

As the nation recovers from the period of post-war reconstruction, resettlement and rehabilitation, it is imperative that the concerns of young people are addressed in order to eliminate the scourge and the feelings of powerlessness, exclusion and marginalization.

It is important therefore to engage a strategy that will generate increased awareness of the role of youths in national development. This strategy must prioritise;

- An increased understanding of participation
- An increased understanding of their relationship with government and other stakeholders and how it relates to processes of development and inclusivity
- An understanding of why previous approaches to their participation did not work.

Once this is done at all levels, it will enable young people and people in power to rationalize the components of youth participation and create opportunities to address local economic, social and political injustices. For this and other reasons, this paper asserts that promoting youth participation in decision-making is fundamental in addressing structural, cultural and direct violence and lays the foundation for effective dialogue between the ruler and the ruled. It forms the basis to help to maintain a strategy of inclusion, transcend conflict, and foster a sustainable political and democratic reform.

In an effort to develop a new perception theory, Sierra Leone will forge ahead if a collective effort is mounted to invest in the future of its young generation by ensuring that participation is driven on an active rather than a passive level. The problem of youth participation should also be rooted on a clear and empirical understanding and knowledge of what participation means to them, who participates, how they participate and for whom they participate. It must be necessitated by the expressed feelings and need for dialogue and negotiation, characterized by youth-led advocacies and sensitization programmes, in order to strengthen the vitality and restorative mechanism for effective future leadership. If the saying that “the youth of today are the future leaders of tomorrow” is true, then we must do all in our powers to fix our minds on making this work through common sense leadership that translates or better paraphrase this notion into a more positive and robust future. For the purpose that this thesis seeks to address, I would proffer that the “youth of today become the leaders of today” if we consider and see today as the tomorrow we were talking about yesterday.

### **6.3. Rationale for Youth participation**

The rationale for youth participation is to contribute, advocate, and draw the attention of stakeholders in Sierra Leone in particular and the world in general on the need to promote effective youth participation in key decision-making process in Sierra Leone, recognizing their role in the decade civil conflict and the strategies for positive action.

Essentially, it seeks to address the way young people relate with the state and with each other, how to interact, communicate and share knowledge, analyze it and arrive at a consensus in decision making. By putting these together, it will develop a variation of a new framework for participation that will build on the known to the knowable.

Sierra Leone is a country with ‘resource curse’ - the socially destructive interplay of poor governance, systemic corruption, and an abundance of valuable mineral resources<sup>79</sup>. Lessons learnt from the conflict in Sierra Leone clearly show the social, economic and political exclusion of young people and how this have led to their involvement as perpetrators and victims of terror. It is this fragile generation that must now participate fully and effectively in post-conflict development efforts through various means including the promotion and consolidation of peace and social justice through reconciliation. The overwhelming pressures of poverty and illiteracy have denied young people any participation in decision-making processes. Giving that District Councils have been established to play a key co-ordinating and funding role in community development, there exists a unique opportunity for community-based civil society voices to become involved in ensuring these duty-bearers fulfill their constitutional obligations.

This initiative has been built into a project of the Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation (SLYEO) and her partner Village AiD, recognizing illiteracy, unemployment, and lack of political voice as the most principal barriers to young people in engaging in local decision-making processes and mechanisms. These inter-related dimensions of exclusion continue to reinforce each other, affecting young women particularly. Many advocacy campaigns continue to use Krio<sup>80</sup> as a medium of communication. Historically a language of power, spoken in predominantly urban settings,

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<sup>79</sup> Review of African Political Economy 104

<sup>80</sup> A language predominantly spoken in the urban settings in Sierra Leone

the experience of hearing Krio does not allow young rural women to participate or express themselves effectively. As much as possible, this initiative will identify and respond to the disaggregated needs of young men and women.

Rights-based programmes in Sierra Leone (and other West African contexts) have taught us that the identification and development of indigenous skills, resources, and media are the most effective means of strengthening *ability* and increasing *opportunity* of young women to express voice. This approach involves two key principles<sup>81</sup>, *Participation* and *Inclusion*. Through their involvement with learning and enterprise activities, excluded people (gender, age, HIV, disability) have forged educative and productive roles for themselves within communities, transforming local perceptions of what young people have to offer. This approach empowers participants to demand the 3<sup>rd</sup> principle, *fulfilling obligation*, from decision-makers.

The transformational consequences of the civil conflict offer significant opportunities to young people to transform their own status and other peoples' perceptions of them. Young Sierra Leoneans possess huge potential and want to make their contribution in developing local economies and building positive communities. This initiative has been designed to allow young people and their organisations to participate effectively in small-scale development initiatives, and so build political literacy skills and models that recognise their interests and protect their human rights.

Promoting young people's participation will enhance the realization of human rights in Sierra Leone and fundamentally deliver a structured process of developmental learning and action that can provide alternative mechanisms for meeting people's immediate needs at the same time as strengthening their political participation in order to claim their rights. Designing this process necessitates a clear understanding of whose rights, what rights, and the legitimate frameworks required to deliver them. This initiative considers the necessity and importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) as reference points to underscore the viability of the subject matter. Within Sierra Leone, these frameworks are fully legitimized within the National Constitution of 1991,

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<sup>81</sup> DFID Target Strategy Paper "Realising human rights for poor people"

and strongly inform current local government legislation policies on youth and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

#### **6.4. The National Youth Policy of Sierra Leone**

The National Youth Policy prescribes the important to consider the need for the participation of youth in Sierra Leone. The importance of youth to the growth and development of any nation is fundamental in assessing and addressing strategic development challenges especially in post-conflict reconstruction and development. Youth are the strongest collective single force of any agrarian economy. Any attempt to marginalise or socially exclude them can be tantamount to the breakdown of social order. Based on the recognition of this fact, the government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) in 2003 formulated a separate policy document to address the problems of youth and to ensure that their needs are articulated in a constructive and cohesive way. The national youth policy articulates and builds reverence over these concerns. The policy is the legal document for youth empowerment and participation in Sierra Leone. It defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 to 35. It maintains that “this age bracket is exposed to multiple influences and requires a variety of social, economic and practical support to realise their full potentials.

“The policy aims at creating a level playing field for youths and to contribute as good, responsible citizens to the development of their country”<sup>82</sup>. The policy describes the nature and component of youth with clear roles and responsibility of the youth, the parents, the state, civil society and national and international organisations.

As part of its objectives, the policy seeks “to promote and defend democracy through active participation in the democracy process at all levels”. The relevance of the policy is expressed in the Postscript as follows;

*“A national youth policy, with explicit rights and responsibilities, should of necessity be predicated on a clear vision of the kind of women and men that will inherit the burden of the governance in the nation-state. If we differ in the kind of society we want for our children, let us agree on the qualities of the individuals who would shoulder the national burden” (Dr.Denis Bright, Minister of Youth and Sports, 2003).*A critical analysis of Dr. Bright’s statement will bring the memories of constructive engagement of young men and women in a democratic society. It emphasises that the development of a nation-state like Sierra Leone can be measured by the level at which its young generation is included or better-of equipped enough to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the nation.

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<sup>82</sup> Sierra Leone National Youth Policy, 2003

### **6.5. The Sierra Leone Youth Profile**

Sierra Leone is rich in human and natural resources. With a population of about 5.2 million in 2002, the population grew at an annual rate of 2.6. By the end of 2005, it was estimated that 55% of the population will be youths. According to the age distribution of the youth population, a growth from 33.7% to 34% and to 35.49% took place in the years of 1963, 1974 and 1985 respectively.

An estimated 700,000 displaced Sierra Leoneans were children and youth with some 9,000 maimed, orphaned or separated from their families. This situation led to a mass influx of young people into the capital city, fleeing their communities to live in squatter areas. Most of these youths were petty traders, drug peddlers or pick-pocketers or street beggars. Young girls resorted to prostitution and other negative vices.

This negative coping strategy among youths led to a situation of increased pressure on the young generation to find a decent living, thus leading to social, economic, cultural and political upheavals.

## 6.6. Youth in Crisis

. . . *The youth were used, abused, misused and in the end refused by unscrupulous politicians*; this is the view I hold for the current plight of the youths of Sierra Leone. This unfortunate experience led the nation to chaos, high level criminality, oppression and undoubtedly aggression in the form of violence through a means of “fighting for freedom” in a rebel movement.

For several years, young men and women barely survived under political dictatorship with a one-party system; you are either for us or you are against us. This was the plight of a unique resource of a small nation, endowed with rich mineral deposits. The voices of the youth was never heard, they were neither allowed to contribute in decision making nor take part in the implementation of the national development agenda. They were passive recipients rather than active participants, their future was crumbled and wrapped in an authoritarian principle of state control, they were the response to the man-made political responsorial “yes sir, no sir”. The effect of this gruesome state of negligence led to perception change of the youth. An investigation into the situation of youth and adolescents in Sierra Leone revealed as follows;

*“The oppressive situation of the Sierra Leonean youth coupled with the sense of marginalization [before the war] opened a window of opportunity for the rebel movement to recruit vast numbers of adolescents and young people at the very start of the civil war, a factor that actually fueled the conflict” (Freetown adolescent research team report, 2002).<sup>83</sup>*

Past and present experiences of youth situation in Sierra Leone builds enough evidences on the fact that youth participation in key decision making process is not a magical proposition for Sierra Leone’s development. Young women and men in Sierra Leone suffered from gross manipulations and exploitation in the hands of ‘people in power’. Youth have been therefore seen as a stage in life, determined by people whose understanding about youth in the present day is ‘when they were youth themselves’. The exploitation of young people started as far back in the 1970s when youths were used as a vehicle to perpetrate destruction in favor of politicians to earn their political goals.

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<sup>83</sup> Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone Report 2002, p.11.

Young people continued to lag behind in a pool of very sad memories, accompanied by a loss of hope for the future. This pattern of inter-generational struggle occupying their minds led to increased lack of consciousness and built a spirit of dependency. Until, the advent of the civil war, they [youth] maintained a steady pace of deviant behavior and political servitude, serving as thugs for little or no gains. The bitter feelings of their hopelessness and powerlessness coupled with the lack of freedom to express themselves worsen their plight and subjected them into an unbearable “culture of silence”. Succeeding governments have never taken the time and ‘pleasure’ to engage youths in constructive dialogue on the negative agendas that were forced on them by their predecessors. Many youths who have today grown into adulthood still carry this scourge of bitterness and can only profess this in common places of young women and men, such as ghettos, ‘gamble grounds’ and drug cartels.

It is clear that this situation has denigrated into a growing division between and among the young people. Even with the advent of peace after a decade of protracted civil war, again fought by the very disgruntled and marginalized youth, there is an evidence of hesitance with no sense of a clear direction of where they are heading to. Youth are not reposed with their conditions and plight and have blamed the adults for that state of disillusion. They have no hopes or belief in the past and present political systems and so continue to challenge the commitment of their elders, especially people in power to sustain peace and security. In a joint research study with adolescent and youths in Sierra Leone, the following comments were made by an adolescent researcher;

*. . . “I don’t care about politics. Politicians are liars. They make promises for jobs and education to youth but then they forget about us. They are only in politics for their pockets, to enrich themselves and their family. My job is my politics. I care for my mother, the government doesn’t” (Samai Brima, age 20, April 2002)*<sup>84</sup>

They believe that much has to come from government, traditional authorities, civil society and other socialization agents such as the families, schools, religious institutions etc to ensure that the turn over a new page and allow the young people to take their rightful place in society, not by means of the ‘power of the gun’.

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<sup>84</sup> Precious Resources: Adolescent in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone, April –July 2002 Report, p.92.

In order to make this a reality, politicians and state authorities must be accountable and transparent and must ensure that the country fulfills its obligation to meeting the needs and basic rights of the youth. The political and governance system much preach loud the ‘gospel of truth’, the ‘youth language must be listened to’ and the segregation between the rich and the poor must be eliminated. We must not preach peace and promote war.

Young people must be given the opportunity to access education, employment and other conditions for their social and economic wellbeing. This reform strategy is essentially crucial in re-shaping the lives of the Sierra Leonean youth as a means to bring them into the mainstream democratic, political and economic systems of governance.

The untold story of youth from the early 1970s to date has grown on the foundation stone of “marginality, exclusivity, and denial”. The ingrained feeling that they hold against successive governments posits the question of why did the nation push them to cruelty and vindictiveness. The Sierra Leonean youth holds the belief that they were subjected to inhuman treatments that led to a loss of hope for the future. Despite the feelings of mistrust and disappointment in the elders, the youth are agitating for change through their inclusion and participation in key decision making process as a means of stepping towards genuine pace, security and national development. This will lead to the telling of the untold story, if not, Can the untold story be ever told by youth themselves?

### **6.7. Why Youth Participation?**

Although Sierra Leone is washed with natural endowments, the struggle to control her resources has stood the test of time. This struggle plunged the country in wide spread chaos, anarchy and disregard for humanity. The lack of inner unity and openness to humanity culminated in a situation of unrest, a misdirection of cognitive power, the silence of emotional power and the abandonment of connective power between the ruler and the ruled. The moral ethical principles that develop the human conscience moved on a survival-based system of authoritarian and submissiveness to anarchy and chaos. This movement broadens the scope of dictatorship and adversarial democracy, making youth suffer the brunt of bad economic and social policies. The lack of consultation of young people on issues that have to do with their social, economic, political and moral welfare reduced them into mere spectators of their own development programmes. The future of young people was determined by others and forced upon them. This situation created a disorderly mechanism in which the establishment of truth and justice was far-fetched. The model of youth exclusion inevitably made the concept of participation an imposed process of knowledge construction, analysis and decision making. This preamble presents the situation of youth and the reasons for their participation in the civil war.

A step towards addressing the participation of youths in decision making processes in Sierra Leone is essential in building good governance and social justice. Because of their role in the conflict, it is important that they are given the space adequate enough to ensure and sustain their participation in national development. In order to ensure this, the political will of government is crucial so as to enable them to gain a distance from their every day lives so that they can see their lives in a new way.....new perceptions lead to new ways of thinking. This will lead to greater critical awareness of their circumstances, thereby leveraging in innovation and creativity.

In order to make this process more dialogical, youth participation must be understood to mean a variety of positive realities; inclusiveness, involvement, layers, delegation of roles and responsibilities, dialogue towards critical analysis around their situation and a constructive shift from totalitarianism to a sense of nationhood.

Youth participation in key decision making processes must take into consideration some fundamental questions of;

- Who decides who participates?

- Who decides what they participate?
- Who decides how they participate?
- Who decides when they participate? And
- Who decides for whom they participate?

These questions probe into empowering advantages which connotes the different levels of participation. This is fundamental in building an enabling, ensuring and empowering environment that will replace the notion of blind patriotism that thwarted their participation in a democracy to a system of collective agenda setting for all. By so doing, Sierra Leone will move ahead into a new discussion of generational change and will thus remain a “Blessed Nation”. This will be an ideal approach to making democratic power a people’s power and leadership a process of recognizing the power of the ruled. Young people’s participation should be spontaneous, not marginal or compulsory. It must be voluntary enough to make them feel part and parcel of the process right from decision making, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation. It must be a bottom-top process that will help to generate new perspectives in facilitating meaningful participation and helping to develop and identify opportunities previously unseen.

## **6.8. Approaches to youth participation in decision making**

Several approaches have been put in place to address this phenomenon at the national level. As part of its commitment to address and forestall future conflict, the GoSL, in collaboration with its international partners and civil society put together the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), geared towards addressing the extreme poverty and marginalization. Significant to the subject matter are the following pillars of the PRSP;

***Pillar One:*** Promoting good governance, security and peace.

DFID have been strengthening government institutions and establishing national civil society agencies (ENCISS). This initiative developed indigenous participatory mechanisms aimed at building dialogue amongst the most excluded groups of young people and relevant duty-bearers. It contributed to establishing educative foundations and local resource networks that allow for effective participation in democratic processes and the development of citizen's information, advisory and legal services

***Pillar Two:*** Pro-poor sustainable growth for food security and job creation:

This builds on building an effective pro-poor sustainable growth and rights to food and job creation. Supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food Security (MAFFS), local enterprise groups / micro-credit systems are implemented through the infrastructure of local banks that provide support for local enterprise and agricultural development, and allow young people to work outside of the stifling traditional patronage networks that lead so many to migrate. This will help to expand a thriving pro-poor credit initiative.

***Pillar Three:*** Human development.

To sustain this process, community-based learning circles are targeting excluded groups of young people whose human development and rights have been distorted beyond measure or meaning. This initiative will support young people to correct that distortion through implementing local strategies that directly address the current imbalances of economic, social and political power. Local awareness, learning, and action generated by local groups support the acquisition of ideas, skills, and resources in education, health, livelihoods and recreation initiatives.

The dichotomy of youth participation has to be understood to be simplistic, realistic and to move towards structural change. This can be made effective

by focusing on strengthening existing efforts and/or social capital that will be sufficient enough to maintain a positive dialogue between youth, the state and household and making conscious attempts to collectively address mobilizing and aggravating factors. It should transcend patrimonial systems, where the state is being used for the benefit of people in power, neo-malthusian systems, where resources and population grow with exponential gap, identity-based and poverty-based systems where relative deprivation has become the order of the day.

Consequently, a better alternative use of resources which will also seek to address the root causes of conflict with the will to create equality or space for peaceful co-existence will be invaluable. We must also accept and build our worldview in a way that all players recognize that conflict is inevitable and cannot be prevented, but rather essential to ensure that societies / nations have the ability to manage or deal with them if they occur. Training in conflict transformation, management and resolution for young people will be an essential step.

A participatory democracy based on liberal democratic principles and practices will also help to prevent domestic conflict from turning into widespread violence. This notion can develop in-depth understanding on the fact proposed by Galtung . . . *“In order to arrive at a solution, accommodate everybody reasonably well. Done, look for a solution, look for something new (Johan Galtung, Conflict theory)*

Fundamentally, the building of alliances will play an intrinsic role in promoting young people’s participation. The existing efforts by civil society non-governmental organizations such as the Youth Alliance for Peace and Development (YAPAD)<sup>85</sup> has helped to raise critical consciousness on the need for a sustained effort through;

a). the planning and implementation of structured training programmes for youth organizations that will strengthen advocacy, equality and project management skills, drawing on different inputs with the specific objective of understanding and representing the priority needs and concerns of the most marginalized groups of people (women, the disabled, people living with HIV/AIDS at every level of the programme),

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<sup>85</sup> YAPAD on-going project: “Empowering young people’s organizations to mainstream gender, disability and health issues within decision making processes in Sierra Leone”

b). to develop a comprehensive rights-based youth advocacy campaign that empowers youth organizations to articulate and represent their concerns with key duty bearers,

c). to draw together the different components of the campaign at chiefdom and district levels, articulating the specific needs of different marginalized groups from the perspectives of young people, and actively targeting government ministries, private companies, and other key duty bearers.

These efforts and approaches to integrate youth participation into main stream development have been translated into an annual “State of the Youth” report, that will be presented to national government agencies and other development partners. This will highlight the ongoing development and improvement of specific human rights situations in the country.

SLYEO and VA’s approach within this context has been built into an on-going project, on “Literacy and Livelihoods to empower young people and their organizations in Sierra Leone”. Learning gained from this will be used as a basis to lobby government and her development partners to enhance more integration of approaches and strengthen the interface between young people and people in power.

A joint initiative has also been carried out with focus group discussions used as an input for the World Development Report 2007, *Development for the Next Generation*<sup>86</sup> in order to understand and articulate young people’s needs and concerns related to employment, poverty and post-conflict development. These efforts aim at understanding attitudes, perceptions and expectations related to employment and employability for youth and the identification of social and institutional issues affecting access to employment for young people.

It is therefore essential to increase support to young people’s participation and to establish viable livelihoods and promote awareness of their rights and responsibilities on key issues that affect them and their participation in nation building.

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<sup>86</sup> World Bank 2006. *World Development Report 2007, Development for the Next Generation*. Washington DC.

## Appendixes

### Appendix A: Lists of Acronyms

1. AU .....African Union
2. APC ..... All People’s Congress
3. AFRC .....Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
4. ACHPR .....African Commission on Human and People’s Rights
5. ACommHPR .....African Commission on Human and People’s Rights
6. CRC .....Convention on the Rights of the Child
7. CAT .....Convention Against Torture
8. CCP .....Commission for the Consolidation of Peace
9. CDF .....Civil Defense Force
10. CEDAW .....Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
11. COMAHS .....College Of Medicine and Allied Health Services
12. DDR .....Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
13. DPKO .....Department of Peace Keeping Operations
14. ECOMOG .....Economic Community (of West Africa) Monitoring Group
15. ECOWAS .....Economic Community of West African States
16. GA .....General Assembly
17. GDP .....Gross Domestic Product

18. GoSL .....Government of Sierra Leone
19. HRC .....Human Rights Commission
20. ICC .....International Criminal Court
21. IMC .....Independent Media Commission
22. ISU .....Independent Security Unit
23. ICCPR .....International Covenant on Civil and Political  
Rights
24. ICESCR .....International Covenant on Economic, Social and  
Cultural Rights
25. IMAAT .....International Military Advisory Training Team
26. LPA .....Lome Peace Accord
27. NGO .....Non-Governmental Organisation
28. NSC .....National School of Nursing
29. NPFL .....National Patriotic Front of Liberia
30. NPRC .....National Provisional Ruling Council
31. OAU .....Organisation of African Unity
32. OHCHR .....Office of the High Commission for Human  
Rights
33. PRS .....Poverty Reduction Strategy
34. IPRSP .....Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
35. PCMH .....Princess Christian Maternity Home
36. RUF .....Revolutionary United Front
37. RSLMF .....Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force

- 38. SC .....Security Council
- 39. SBU .....Small Boys Unit
- 40. SLA .....Sierra Leone Army
- 41. SRN .....State Registered Nurse
- 42. SSD .....State Security Division
- 43. SCSL .....Special Court for Sierra Leone
- 44. SECHN .....State Enrolled Community Health Nurse
- 45. SLPP .....Sierra Leone People’s Party
- 46. TRC .....Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- 47. UK .....United Kingdom
- 48. UN .....United Nations
- 49. USA .....United States of America
- 50. UNDP .....United Nations Development Programme
- 51. UNSC .....United Nations Security Council
- 52. UNOMSIL .....United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
- 53. UNAMSIL .....United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
- 54. UNHCHR .....United Nations High Commission for Human Rights
- 55. UDHR .....Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Appendix B: Sample of Questionnaire**

**A Questionnaire on Reconciliation and Social Justice in Malal-Mara, Kholifa Mabang and Yoni Bana Chiefdoms in the Tonkolili District using a case study of Tabotsaneh.**

**SECTION 1:**

1.1. Name of Chiefdom:..... 1.2: Section:.....

1.3: Village:.....:1.4: Date:.....

1.5: Name of Respondent:..... 1.6: Sex:..... 1.7: Age:.....

**SECTION 2:**

2.1: Have you heard about the concept of Tabotsaneh ? Yes ..... No..... If Yes, how and

Where?.....

2.2:What do you understanding about Tabotsaneh?.....

2.3: In your view, is Tabotsaneh a useful concept/tool for Reconciliation and Social Justice? Yes..... No ....

2.4: If Yes to 2.3 above, how useful has it been? If No, why and what are the factors responsible?.....

2.5: Have you ever been involved in any Tabotsaneh related activity? Yes..... No.... If Yes, what type of activity?.....

2.5.1: What role did you play?..... If No, Why?.....

2.6: Who were the key players?.....

2.7: What is the impact of Tabotsaneh in your community?.....

2.8: What are the challenges of Tabotsaneh?.....

**SECTION 3:**

3.1: What does Reconciliation mean to you?.....

3.2: What does Social Justice mean to you?.....

.....

3.3: Is Reconciliation and Social Justice working in your community? Yes..... No..... If Yes,

How?.....

If No, Why?.....

3.4: What are the available social services in your community?.....

3.5: What recommendations can you give to improve Tabotsaneh in order to promote Reconciliation and Social Justice?.....

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4.0: Name of Enumerator:..... Date:.....

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