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Addressing and Mitigating Violence

Is it the Right Time for the International Community to Exit Sierra Leone?

Jeremy Allouche
(with the collaboration of Cassandra Biggs, Ngolo Katta and James Vincent)

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List of Abbreviations

ADMS	Artisanal Diamond Mining Scheme
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
APC	All People's Congress
APPYA	All Political Parties Youth Association
ASJP	Access to Security and Justice Project
AVM	Anti-Violence Movement
CCYA	Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities
CDC	Chiefdom Development Committee
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
CSOs	civil society organisations
DACDF	Diamond Area Community Development Fund
DDR	disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
EBF	Electoral Basket Fund
EC	European Commission
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Index
EPP	Employment Promotion Programme
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GNI	gross national income
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HELP-SL	Hands Empowering the Less Privileged in Sierra Leone
IDPs	internally displaced persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMATT	International Military Training and Advisory Team Sierra Leone
IRCBP	Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Programme
ISAT	International Security Advisory Team
LGA	Local Governance Act
NAYCOM	National Youth Commission
NCDDR	National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
NYC	National Youth Commission
NEW	National Election Watch
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PBC	UN Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PMDC	People's Movement for Democratic Change
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SLPRSP	Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SLYEO	Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UNAMSIL	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIOSL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
YES	Youth Employment Scheme

Executive Summary

In the eyes of the international community, Sierra Leone is seen as the model for successful post-conflict peacebuilding. At the end of 2012, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that it had removed Sierra Leone from its list of 'fragile and conflict-affected' countries, and graduated the country to low-income status. On paper, the move reflected Sierra Leone's more stable political environment, as evidenced by largely fair and violence-free elections in November 2012. The success of the elections was also highlighted (United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, UNIPSIL) as a reason to wrap up its mission, which it will do by 2014. A glance at key indicators – in terms of growth forecast and stable elections – will project Sierra Leone as a model for a successful post-conflict state. However, a detailed analysis of the country's socioeconomic trends, its political institutions and the logic and dynamics of violence show a more disturbing picture where Sierra Leone today shares similar conditions with the Sierra Leone before the outbreak of the civil war.

Efforts by the international donor community to decentralise power to the margins, both geographically and demographically, have failed. Instead, this focus on the institutions of governance has allowed the same elite to maintain power, and at the same time, created a new layer of elite to benefit from reforms, natural resources and donor funds.

Sierra Leone remains one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. In the decade after the civil war, it remained in the bottom ten of the 180+ countries on the Human Development Index – a measure of people's freedoms and their standard of living, focusing on health and levels of education. Over the past two years, it has moved up three places, driven by an increase in GDP that is the result of royalties from mining the country's natural resources: diamonds, iron ore, rutile, bauxite, and gold. Yet, while Sierra Leone's GDP has shown significant improvements over the last few years (GDP was projected to grow 35.9 per cent in 2012),[1] this improvement has only benefited a narrow layer of elite, at both the national and local levels, and failed to trickle down to ordinary citizens. The lack of transparency around national resource revenue and the failure of robust government oversight on how those revenues are spent, led this year to the suspension of Sierra Leone from EITI, the Extractive Industries Transparency Index.

Anger and frustration at the inequalities are again manifesting as violence, in the mining areas, on the streets and in universities and schools, at times manipulated by the very politicians who are supposed to serve and protect citizens. Many youth gangs took part in violence around the 2003 and 2007 elections. Violence has also broken out between fans of rival music labels, and between fraternities in schools, which are also divided along national political lines and fanned by a political elite looking to mobilise a youth wing. With disenfranchised youth feeling disempowered and cut off from society, organised crime and gang membership can offer them a sense of belonging and purpose. While not on the scale seen during the decade of conflict from 1991 to 2002, these new, emerging forms of violence are worryingly omnipresent in daily life. At the forefront of this violence are the youth, who feel they have again been excluded by the institutions that are supposed to represent them – the National Youth Commission and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, both of which are run by figures from the country's political establishment – and in which they have little voice.

In the 15 years that the international community has been in Sierra Leone, very little has been done to address youth exclusion, one of the grievances considered a driver in the conflict. Youth unemployment stands at about 60 per cent, compounded by a nascent private

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[1] IMF, World Economic Outlook April 2012.

sector based almost exclusively on the non-labour-intensive mining industry and a lack of opportunities for education.

In addition, an externally imposed peace agreement that focused on ending the conflict, and disarming the population, has meant there have been few efforts to address any of the lingering animosity between ex-combatants and those who suffered during 11 years of war. Building peace, reconciliation and trust among the populace was a second-order priority. Many feel a sense of injustice that the crimes that were committed across the country were never dealt with. Only 13 people were ever tried for war crimes by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, yet hundreds more carried out atrocities for which they never had to answer. Ostracised from their communities, however, many youth ex-combatants have again been pushed to the margins.

Sierra Leone's winner-takes-all style of politics has been highlighted by the UN as one of the biggest risks to stability in the country. Up until now, it has largely been mediated by the international community and while the electoral violence of the previous two elections was avoided in 2012, it is unclear if the government can maintain that without the support of external forces.

We therefore make the following recommendations.

Youth employment and empowerment

Youth employment has been neglected as a policy priority both by the international community and the government of Sierra Leone. Youth employment programmes focus on providing youth with work opportunities in agriculture in rural areas. While this is an important aspect of the country's development, it will not suit all individuals and there have to be opportunities for those who do not want to work in agriculture (Sumberg & Okali 2013). Many youth want to remain in the urban areas where they have been since the end of the war. More employment should be generated through investment in industry, and that means a renewed focus on power generation. The Agenda for Prosperity, which is the newly articulated Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for 2013–2018, needs to have clear, robust targets for youth employment, as currently its methods for including youth in the economic development of the country are ambiguous. At the same time, despite the creation of the National Youth Commission, the political space for youth has not opened up and more avenues for the youth to express themselves and to realise their potential need to be created so that they can be properly involved in governance and in the decision-making process. Both youth employment and empowerment are central as these are linked to economically motivated violence, which is a substantial problem in Sierra Leone.

Resource extraction and revenue distribution

Sierra Leone's expected growth in relation to the mining economy is substantial. Land is gaining value and there are now many conflicts in rural areas over land rights. More fundamentally, there are many questions around the benefits of mining development for the local community. In this respect, the government of Sierra Leone should take all the steps necessary to rejoin the Extractive Industry Transparency Index (EITI). The EITI Board asked Sierra Leone to undertake four remedial actions for the suspension to be lifted, namely: (1) that all relevant companies and government entities participate in the reporting process; (2) that the disclosures from government entities are based on accounts audited to international standards; (3) that the government ensures that all material companies comprehensively disclose all material payments in accordance with the agreed reporting templates; and finally (4) that the government ensures that all government agencies comprehensively disclose all material revenues in accordance with the agreed reporting templates. These corrective actions could be addressed by publishing a supplementary 2010 EITI Report, or through the 2011 EITI Report to be published before 31 December 2013.

Divisive politics

Sierra Leone's winner-takes-all politics is causing national divisions that are spilling over into schools and onto the street. Building on successful experiences to date, there should be more focus on activities that build peace, such as intergroup sports activities and peace clubs that reward schools for peaceful term times. Furthermore, the divisions between ex-combatants and communities needs to be addressed through new initiatives that deal with the reconciliation process. The government of Sierra Leone and donors should respond to youth's call for education as the linchpin of their recovery and should make the reconstruction of formal and non-formal education systems and the promotion of youth's livelihoods and entrepreneurship a priority. Divisive politics are for the moment framed as a two-sided dispute between political parties but there are dangers that the division may become a two-sided dispute between the youth and the elderly.

In the light of these three challenges that are linked to emerging new forms of violence, the government of Sierra Leone and the international community should include conflict prevention as a core aid priority as part of UNIPSIL exit strategy and donor transition strategies. This focus would entail maintaining the conditions for investment in youth employment and youth empowerment, expanding off-farm employment and would encourage accountability and transparency mechanisms in relation to resource extraction and revenue distribution.

1　Introduction

2013 has been a momentous year for Sierra Leone. At the end of 2012, the country held its third presidential election since the end of the civil war, which was considered successful by the international community. This constituted a turning point as those elections laid the foundation for the exit strategy of UNIPSIL, the UN's peacebuilding Mission in Sierra Leone, and the reclassification of Sierra Leone from a 'fragile and conflict-affected' country to a low-income one. The latter is important as it not only reflects a lexicon shift, but also will considerably affect donor budgets and policy priorities for Sierra Leone.

Violence mitigation strategies since the end of the 11-year conflict in 2002 have been widely hailed as a success. The capital, Freetown, for example, is now considered one of the safest cities in Africa,[2] and the number of armed violent incidents across the country is also very low (Dowd and Raleigh 2012). As a result, Sierra Leone is viewed by the international community as a success story in terms of post-conflict peacebuilding. The Africa Research Institute called it 'one of Africa's most successful post-conflict states' (2011). The Department for International Development (DFID) highlights its experience in Sierra Leone as a successful policy practice, which can inform its thinking on security sector reform and security and justice (DFID 2010). On the UN side, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon declared that it is 'the best and most advanced UN integrated peacebuilding mission' (RFI 2010). Consequently, international observers have hailed Sierra Leone's progress in preventing a relapse into widespread conflict.

Collier (2004) shows that a country's risk of relapse into conflict is greater in the first ten years after the conflict – typically around 50 per cent. Sierra Leone has passed the ten-year mark without a return to conflict, but this focus on the absence of widespread violence masks the vulnerability of the country to instability. While the prevention of a resumption of widespread conflict might suggest that peacebuilding policies have succeeded in Sierra Leone, this focus on the absence of conflict masks wider structural issues, including the unmet aspirations of youth, their continued marginalisation and localised new forms of violence.

More critically, a number of specialists have argued that the political and socioeconomic conditions that led to the conflict are still present, or have been recreated. The restoration of the chieftaincy system, for example, has restored the same rural elite (traditionally, older men) and excluded youth and those not part of the patronage system (Fanthorpe 2005; Fanthorpe, Lavali & Sesay 2011; Hanlon 2005; Jackson 2005; Meyer 2007). Many specialists in fact have blamed international donors for restoring the pre-war political system. As early as 2004, the International Crisis Group (2004) even stated that a 'consensus between donors and the political elite may entirely miss the realities of ordinary people'.

Furthermore, on the development side, the situation has hardly changed from pre-civil war levels. Sierra Leone has been at the bottom of the Human Development Index since the end of the war. Some analysts have argued that the donors' focus on 'security first' has been at the expense of inclusive development and job creation, and therefore the same people have been excluded, which has created the same grievances for conflict (Denney 2011). Indeed, while the security situation may have improved, Sierra Leone faces many challenges, including its vulnerability to organised crime and increased lawlessness. Anger and frustration at the inequalities are again manifesting as violence, in the mining areas, on the

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[2] Secretary of State for International Development Douglas Alexander, quoted in 'Sierra Leone Police Media Relations', 27 February 2008, www.news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20057809.shtml (12 May 2009); Katrina Manson, 'Paradise regained in Sierra Leone', The Independent (London), 2 May 2009, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/ africa/paradise-regained-in-sierra-leone-1677671.html (all in Denney 2011).

streets and in universities and schools, at times manipulated by the very politicians who are supposed to serve and protect people. While not on the scale seen during the decade of conflict from 1991 to 2002, these new, emerging forms of violence are worryingly omnipresent in daily life.

This report highlights how three main factors have increased the country's vulnerability and will need to be managed carefully if political instability is to be averted, especially with the departure of the UN's peacebuilding mission:[3]

- The international community has been omnipresent in Sierra Leone for the last 15 years and imposed a peace agreement and a set of governance reforms;
- The government and elites have used the reforms to their own benefit, thereby reproducing a political and economic system similar to the one before the outbreak of the civil war;
- Youth have been excluded from the key reforms and are still marginalised. The end of key youth programmes in terms of conflict prevention may have an impact on stability and violence.

With UNIPSIL planning its exit in 2014, and other donors looking to change their programmes in light of the reclassification of Sierra Leone from 'fragile and conflict-affected' to low-income, the question remains, how will the political settlement be renegotiated after the departure of the international community and how stable will the country be given that the political and economic conditions to the conflict have been recreated?

Our understanding of political settlement is that they can emerge from one-off events, such as elite pacts and peace agreements, but they can also take the form of dynamic and fluid processes of (overt and covert) accommodation, bargaining, compromise, and coalition and network-building between elites that shape the nature of the post-conflict state (Schultze-Kraft 2013). In post-conflict contexts, political settlements are viewed as building elements for the security and stability of the country. These usually take the form of new elite coalitions that overcome the dividing lines of the armed conflict.

In the first part of this report, we will show how the international community was crucial in imposing a peace agreement in Sierra Leone and how 'progressive' governance reforms (decentralisation, chieftaincy) just reproduced the political system that existed before the outbreak of the civil war. We will use two examples to explain how the political system is being reproduced – namely the political economy of natural resources (diamond and now iron ore) and the marginalisation of youth in the political settlement and dialogue. In the second section, we will focus on the logic and dynamics of violence and current conflict prevention policies. Finally, we will review and discuss the various exit strategies available and suggest a number of recommendations in this light.

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[3] In 2008, UNIPSIL replaced the UN Integrated Office. In 2013, it was granted another year's operation, but with a March 2014 deadline for a full drawdown (www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10961.doc.htm).

2   Back to the old system?

Sierra Leone is considered a stable democratic political system because it has conducted three successive and successful multi-tier elections.[4] All three have been declared, 'fair, credible and violence-free' by international observers from the European Union, the United States, African Union, and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and a couple of other well-known and reputable election monitoring groups.[5] However, this system is the product of an externally imposed peace agreement that ended the civil war in 2001. In fact, Sierra Leone is not a particular exception in the history of modern peace agreements. Up to 2001, with the exception of Mozambique, every modern conflict in post-colonial Africa has ended with the imposition of a peace agreement by the international community (Clapham 2001). In Sierra Leone, it took several attempts to see the emergence of a new political settlement between the various elites, namely the members of the ruling party, the paramount chiefs and the members of ruling families in local communities. Between 1996 and 2001, there were two ceasefires (January and April 1996 – Abidjan), one peace plan (Conakry peace plan in 1997) and four peace agreements (November 1996 – Abidjan; July 1999 – Lomé; November 2000 – Abuja; November 2001 – Abuja). While most of the international community supported the return of the newly elected president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah (1996–1997, 1998–2007), of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), it also pressured him to open negotiations with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).[6] While the first peace agreement (Abidjan 1996) essentially failed because the level of trust between the army and Kabbah deteriorated following Kabbah's decision to disband the army,[7] the second ultimately gave too much leeway to Sankoh (amnesty) and the RUF forces[8] which were granted three cabinet posts in a power-sharing interim government. In this second peace agreement (Lomé, July 1999), negotiations overestimated the influence of rebel leader Foday Sankoh in influencing other rebel leaders (such as Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon or Augustine Gbao) in accepting the peace agreement. This focus was counterproductive and signalled a narrowly conceived peace process which should have been broader and more inclusive in order to gain legitimacy and traction. It also sent a message that violence and criminality were a legitimate route to political power and undermined the credibility of post-settlement authorities (Accord 2000). The international community changed its position on negotiation between the two parties following the attacks of RUF soldiers on UN peacekeeping forces in May 2000 and British troops were sent in to stabilise the situation. After 2000, the quest for a peace agreement was abandoned and Sierra Leone became a *de facto* UN protectorate (Meyer 2007; Clapham 2001). The resulting Abuja ceasefire was held under externally enforced conditions, and was built on the Lomé agreement, which included a DDR programme (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) and a Truth and Reconciliation programme.

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[4] The 2009 Mo Ibrahim Index ranked Sierra Leone as one of five rising countries that have made progress in democratic governance.

[5] These include the Women's Situation Room (WSR), the Carter Centre, the ECOWAS election monitoring group, and the National Election Watch (NEW).

[6] The international community did not want to see a democratic leader they had worked hard to keep in power usurped by a rebel group (Bright 2009; Rashid 2009).

[7] In light of the deteriorating situation, the army became largely discredited (corrupted and mismanaged) and Kabbah's strategy was to rely on ECOMOG and the *Kamajors.* ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) was a multilateral armed force and the *Kamajors* were a group of traditional hunters and the major group involved in the CDF.

[8] Foday Saybana Sankoh was the leader and founder of the Reveolutionary United Front (RUF).

It is worth noting that Lomé was agreed among elites, including senior members of the RUF and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) (although the divisions between the two rebel groups meant that the RUF only allowed those members of the AFRC who supported its position to attend the negotiations). There were no representatives of youth combatants present and no specific provisions were made for them as part of the political settlement (Cubitt 2012). Groups like war-affected youth, women and children were not included in the policies that emerged after the cessation of war. This insensitivity to gender was a contributing factor to the insecurity that re-emerged after the three initial ceasefires signed in Abidjan in 1996, as women felt marginalised and colluded with the fighting forces as a way to highlight their significance so they could be included in the DDR process. Despite this, the DDR programme was not gender-sensitive so women's, girls' and children's needs were not properly addressed by the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) (Ginifer 2003).

The Abuja Ceasefire Agreement, signed on 10 November 2000, was the first step towards resolving the conflict as the country at the time was divided between the RUF controlling the north and east of the country and the government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) or the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) controlling the west and south. The government of Sierra Leone and the RUF affirmed their commitment to the Lomé Peace Agreement of 7 July 1999, agreed to an immediate ceasefire and agreed to continue with the disarmament process. However, it was the Abuja Ceasefire Review Agreement of 2 May 2001 (Abuja II), facilitated by ECOWAS that provided the real breakthrough in the peace process. On this occasion, UNAMSIL joined the RUF and GoSL in tripartite discussions. In it, the GoSL and the RUF reviewed the implementation of the agreement signed on 10 November 2000. They agreed on a simultaneous disarmament of combatants belonging to the RUF and the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), and stressed the need for the government to restore its authority in areas previously under RUF control, where UNAMSIL had begun deploying (Malan, Rakate & McIntyre 2002).

In his 11th report to the Security Council on Sierra Leone, the UN Secretary-General specified four conditions that should be met before elections could be held in Sierra Leone:

1. Completion of disarmament;
2. Transformation of the RUF into a political party;
3. Restoration of civil authority throughout the country; and
4. Deployment of UNAMSIL and the guarantee of freedom of movement throughout the country.

He added that the resettlement of returning refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) also needed to be made a factor in the electoral equation and that, consequently, all parties should accept a postponement of elections until May 2002 (UNSC 2001: para 61).

On 18 January 2002, after the formal conclusion of a UN-supervised disarmament, President Kabbah announced the end of hostilities in Sierra Leone, signalling the end of the war. A UN peacekeeping force, 17,000-strong, patrolled the countryside. The NCDDR said that a total of 45,844 ex-combatants — 27,490 from the pro-government CDF and 18,354 from the RUF — had been disarmed, a large number of them children, and a 'new' British-trained Sierra Leone Army began to deploy near Sierra Leone's borders with Liberia and Guinea, ahead of elections that were scheduled for May. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, who was the first elected president of the war-ravaged country in 1996, was re-elected in 2002 for a five-year term.

2.1   Decentralisation

The international community has since directed the course of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, with DFID, the UK's Department for International Development, as the key implementer. Donors believed that the country's instability was due to a broken governance pact where

fringe society (both geographical and political) was marginalised. Any new political settlement, they believed, had to address this alienation of the countryside by the centre. Donors, therefore, pushed for the reintroduction of decentralised institutions such as the chieftaincy to repair the broken governance pact. The problem with this diagnosis was that abuse and corruption by traditional chiefs had been an underlying cause of the conflict (Fanthorpe 2005; Keen 2005; Richards 2005).

Donors believed that the centralisation of power[9] was an important driver of the war. This centralisation had been increasing since Sierra Leone's independence in 1961 with the rule of the Margai family and then the Mayor of Freetown, Siaka Stevens. The one-party system that was created under President S. Stevens, and then under his appointed successor Joseph Momoh, furthered the centralisation of resources and power in Freetown at the expense of the margins where the civil war began. As a result, donors pushed the decentralisation item in the post-conflict agenda. Since the 1996 presidential elections, DFID, the European Union (EU), the World Bank, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and others have supported the government with a plan for decentralisation, good governance and public sector reform (Jackson 2005; Thomson 2007). However, it wasn't until after the conflict in 2002 that the implementation of that plan began. In 2004, the government passed the Local Governance Act (LGA),[10] which had two main components (Srivastava and Larizza 2011):

1.   Restore and re-legitimise the institutions of the chieftaincy which had suffered under one-party rule and during the conflict;
2.   Restore local councils, which had been abolished by the first president of Sierra Leone, Siaka Stevens, in 1972.

These reforms had some positive effects. From 2004 to 2008, there was a significant turnover in elected councillors, suggesting people believed in the electoral process. Marginalised groups and women also benefited from the expanded political space. In 2004, women had 13 per cent of seats in local councils, in 2008 this increased to 18 per cent (Srivastava and Larizza 2011).

On paper, the Kabbah government was quite supportive of the decentralisation programme. However, some scholars have posited that the government was just saying what donors wanted to hear in order to receive funding (Hanlon 2005; Jackson 2005; Thomson 2007). Srivastava and Larizza (2011) suggest that the government also had political and economic reasons for supporting decentralisation. Politically, the SLPP (Sierra Leone People's Party) was the prime victim of the pre-war political economy: the dismantling of local councils went hand-in-hand with the concentration of power in Freetown and the consolidation of APC (All People's Congress) power, and the SLPP may have perceived decentralisation as a good opportunity to meet popular expectations, enhance the government's legitimacy and increase political support.

However, Jackson points to several moves by the government that could indicate their less than genuine support for full decentralisation. These include the delay in council elections from 2003 to 2004, the ways in which the government ignored the findings of a UNDP nationwide consultation, and the decision to add a proviso in the LGA to bring all councils under the supervision of three central government ministers. A further indication of the government's ambiguity about local-level democracy was the change in wording of the

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[9] Such as the APC's 1972 decision to dismantle local councils.

[10] Under the Act there were 14 district councils and five city councils in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Koidu, New Sembehun and Makeni. The local council was designated 'the highest political authority' in the jurisdiction, and elections to these posts were held in 2004 and 2008. Under the Act, chiefdoms were recognised as the lowest political unit, and paramount chiefs were provided representation in councils and membership of ward committees.

councils' authority. When it was published in 2004, the LGA described councils as the 'highest political authority in the locality', while a subsequent 2010 decentralisation policy (brought in by the APC) describes them as the highest 'development and service delivery authority' (Broadbent 2012; Fanthorpe *et al.* 2011; Srivastava and Larizza 2011; Jackson 2007). The APC also reintroduced district officers, a potential way of bringing the national to the local and removing some of the power from local councils, which could threaten the centre and the elite's power (Accord 2012; Broadbent 2012; Srivastava and Larizza 2011). The end result is that the local councils are seen by the party in power, at best as an extension of their own control, and at worst as a threat. Central government would therefore go out of its way to contain their power, mostly through a 'divide and rule' strategy (Srivastava and Larizza 2011; Fanthorpe 2005).

In short, from a political point of view, decentralisation was not as transformative as donors had hoped – that is, it did not meet their goal to diffuse power among the elites. The Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Programme (IRCBP), a multidonor trust fund contributed to by the European Commission and DFID, which financed all costs related to decentralisation, came to an end on 30 June 2011. It is not clear how effectively the staff or departments will be integrated into the government (Srivastava and Larizza 2011).

2.2   Chieftaincy

It is widely accepted that the chieftaincy played a key role in driving the conflict. Chiefs were guardians of the land, and therefore had power over young men in their village (Jackson 2007). Arbitrary fines that left young men in debt to chiefs are said to have been the most hated aspect (LSE/PWC 2009). Many disaffected youth joined the RUF as foot soldiers. The way in which chiefs were targeted during the war (humiliated and often killed) corroborates how despised the institution was (Jackson 2005).

In 1998/1999, DFID, UNDP and the UN provided support for the restoration of the chieftaincy system through the Paramount Chiefs Restoration Programme, later named the Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme. Many chiefs had fled when the RUF came sweeping through the countryside and donors felt that the return of the paramount chiefs would signify to others that the situation had stabilised. So, part of the 'support' was to build new houses for the chiefs, to entice them back. In this way, 100 chiefs in the south and east returned home, the south and east being traditional SLPP strongholds (Thompson 2007). Restoration was relatively easy in the south-eastern region (as compared to the northern region) since the communities in these two regions had CDF[11] that were technically headed by a chief, and in most cases it was the paramount chief by virtue of his position in the secret societies[12] from which the CDF were formed (Vincent 2012: 18–20). Most members of the communities in Bo, Moyamba, Bonthe and Pujehun in the south and in Kenema, Kailahun and Kono in the east, said the same story about the return of the chiefs. It was said, 'the chiefs after the war took over with no resistance from any quarter. They had a meeting which was more or less a peace talk with those who worked as chiefs in their stead and ensured that they worked together for a while before formally retaking power and the RUF proxy chiefs gave up voluntarily to the chiefs' (Vincent 2012: 19).

While the institution itself is valued, large groups across the countryside also believe the chieftaincy system has been corrupted and mismanaged and needs further reform (Broadbent 2012; Srivastava and Larizza 2011; Fanthorpe *et al.* 2011; Jackson 2007; Hanlon 2005). The decentralisation policy has not helped and, in fact, has accentuated the struggle

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[11] CDF were paramilitary organisations who fought in the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991–2002). They supported the elected government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah against the rebel groups RUF and AFRC.

[12] Secret societies are a key component of Temne culture, which is divided between the men's Poro society and the women's Bondo society.

between councils and chiefs. The Local Governance Act (2004) put councils as the single highest authority in the jurisdiction, and the chairman of the council as the most politically powerful. Yet, chiefs still see themselves as the highest political order, especially where resources and land come into play (Srivastava and Larizza 2011; Jackson 2007). More importantly, the reintroduction of the chieftaincy system appears to have allowed the same rural elite, mainly older men, to maintain control of power and resources (Jackson 2007; Thomson 2007; Hanlon 2005; Richards 2005).

While the aim of international donors was to transform the political system to address the grievances of the conflict, political institutions were established along the lines of the old system. The reintroduction of the chieftaincy and the decentralisation programme in most instances simply recreated the old networks of political patrimony that existed pre-war.[13] The political economy of mining is a good illustration of this phenomenon.

2.3 The political economy of mining

While diamonds were not the initial trigger of conflict in Sierra Leone, it has been widely acknowledged that they played a critical role in prolonging the 11-year war, by providing both the RUF and successive governments with the money with which to buy guns and military support (Maconachie and Binns 2007; Smillie, Gberie & Hazleton 2000; Reno 1995). But diamonds have played a bigger role in shaping Sierra Leone's political environment, providing national governments, from the colonial state to the post-conflict 'democratic' governments, and chiefs at the local level, with the resources with which to buy support and legitimacy. As a result, the patrimonial linkages that were forged during the colonial era to maintain control over the country have been reinforced and deepened, not only by successive governments, but also through donor-, local and national NGO- and Sierra Leone-government-led initiatives that either favoured the rural elite or co-opted them.

Since colonial times, a system of financial incentives in return for delivered support created an uneven power structure propped up by revenue from diamonds. This enriched those within the system (the chiefs, elders, landowning families,[14] private diamond companies and the state) and impoverished and criminalised those on the outside, in this case the poor indigenous artisanal miners. The 1956 Artisanal Diamond Mining Scheme (ADMS), which was meant to address this issue, required elite support for implementation and ended up being a non-reform. Since independence in 1961, post-colonial governments continued to support this patron–client relationship, buying private elite support but neglecting legitimate public support.

In the years leading up to the war, diamond mining communities remained among the poorest areas in the country, while rural chiefs maintained absolute control over local residents, including access to citizenship and livelihoods. Those who lacked patronage, especially the young, remained uneducated and unemployed and often faced a lifetime of hard labour. A set of grievances, including lack of involvement in mining-related decisions and the absence of development and investment in the mining regions exacerbated general discontent with the government and facilitated the onset of the war (Kawamoto 2012; Fanthorpe and Maconachie 2010; Maconachie 2008; Jackson 2007, 2005).

At the end of the civil war in 2002, a second diamond rush took place, with a substantial number of ex-combatants, many of whom had never joined the DDR programme, flooding to Kono (Fanthorpe and Maconachie 2010). But because of their association with the RUF and

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[13] In the pre-war situation, paramount chiefs were the power holders in their communities and could influence support for a candidate.

[14] Every village community has a number of families that have ownership of land. The same applies to ruling houses in chiefdoms. These few people would distribute land and or sell to visitors and non-indegenes wanting land for leasehold or freehold.

their distinct identity – they are not ethnic Konos[15] – they have been forced to the margins. Maconachie and Binns (2007) interviewed a number of young miners and found that many of them saw mining as the only hope for financing the reconstruction of their livelihoods.

Current indicators show that development gains are increasingly located in urban areas, rather than rural ones, where most mining takes place. In urban areas, GDP per capita rose from US$153 in 2000 to US$348 in 2008 and asset-based poverty reduced from 67.5 per cent in 2003 to 61.6 per cent in 2007. However, in rural areas where mining occurs and where 62 per cent of the population lives, there has been a decline in overall GDP growth and mining sector share from 2.016 per cent in 2003 to 0.02 per cent in 2006. Rural poverty fell from 78.3 per cent to 77.1 per cent while urban poverty declined from 47.3 per cent to 35.4 per cent (Zulu and Wilson 2012). It is thought that the faster growth in urban areas was driven by donor involvement, specifically overseas aid.[16]

At the same time, working conditions in the diamond areas are dire. Diggers, many of them still children, face appalling working conditions. Residents of mining areas complain of high levels of violence, environmental degradation, water pollution, and the influx of migrant labour, with high rates of prostitution and HIV/AIDS. Most alluvial diamond diggers lead hard, insecure, dangerous and unhealthy lives. With average earnings of less than a dollar a day they fall squarely into the broad category of 'absolute poverty'.[17]

Diggers are still subjected to price inequalities. A 'typical' good-quality, one-carat rough diamond fetching the exporter US$1,100 would earned the digger(s), miner and dealer US$130, US$370 and US$1,000, respectively. These price inequalities, and the low material benefits for artisanal miners can also be attributed to the fact that a majority of diamonds continue to be smuggled out of the country instead of going through the official channels. Furthermore, the LGA does not enable chiefs to tax large industrial miners, but they can tax the local artisan diggers, which again disproportionately affects local people (Koroma 2012).[18] As a result, diamond mining communities are not receiving major benefits from the industry and, even if they are, often these are directed at development projects that do not benefit the community at large, but just paramount chiefs and their networks.

Many diamonds-for-development schemes implemented by donors have failed because they do not address the underlying power structures that have become entrenched in Sierra Leone (Zulu and Wilson 2012: 1105). The Diamond Area Community Development Fund (DACDF) for example, which was formally approved by the Ministry of Mineral Resources in 2002, was intended to strengthen citizen participation in decision-making about natural resource management. Because of donor concerns about corruption within the national government, funds were initially given directly to the chiefs, but after it was reported that chiefs were not using the money effectively, the Chiefdom Development Committees (CDCs) were set up to receive the funds and ensure greater accountability and transparency (Kawamoto 2012).

Zulu and Wilson (2012) say that there have been some developmental benefits from the DACDF, notably infrastructure investment in schools and roads, which have resulted in a trickledown effect, including better access for some workers to the markets. However, power relations in the communities allowed the elite capture of DACDF resources by chiefs and

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[15] The Kono people are a major ethnic group in Sierra Leone, constituting about 7 per cent of the country's total population.

[16] Sierra Leone received nearly US$777 million in net Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) from 2000 to 2009. With three-quarters of this allocated to sectors whose expenditures are disproportionately in urban areas, it is likely that ODA contributed more to urban poverty reduction and national GDP per capita gains than increased mineral exports.

[17] www.ddiglobal.org/pages/mission.php

[18] Large-scale industrialised mining only accounts for about ten per cent of Sierra Leone's diamond exports (Fanthorpe and Maconachie 2010). The majority of diamond mining is still done by digging and sifting by an estimated 100–200,000 diggers or tributors (Maconachie 2008).

their networks; this manifested as lack of accountability of chiefs, exclusion by chiefs of members of society outside their networks, and power struggles between chiefs and local councils. Much like they did in colonial days, chiefs co-opted 'for their personal agendas, political and economic liberalisation reform processes partly designed to limit their customary authority and influence relative to the democratically elected local representatives under decentralisation' (Zulu and Wilson 2012: 1123).

This same system that allowed mining companies and local elites to collaborate on extracting diamonds with little thought for the development of communities, is now being replicated with the mining of Sierra Leone's other natural resources, specifically iron ore, gold, rutile and bauxite. Despite a progressive Mines and Minerals Act (2009) that includes a section on community development, residents of mining areas are still finding that their development needs are not met. At least half of the compensation paid to landowners by mining companies goes to the paramount chief, local MP and district council, ostensibly for development purposes, but villagers say they see little of that. In addition, promises made by mining companies for employment opportunities have been slow in coming, despite in some areas, dozens of unemployed youth coming into mining areas seeking work.[19]

The government has also been criticised for giving London Mining[20] a preferential tax rate below the one stipulated in the Mining Act, and the country was suspended from the EITI on 26 February 2013 for failing to be open about its mining revenues.

The danger is that unless revenue from national resources is more equally distributed, and the marginalised, underprivileged miners and youth included in the political economy, discontent will again boil over into conflict (Maconachie 2008). Already, this is happening. There have been several protests in diamond and iron ore mining communities in the past few years, which started off peacefully over compensation for lost land, poor working conditions and lack of employment, but which then turned into violent incidents.[21]

Overall, one can see that the political economy of natural resources (diamond and now iron ore, gold and other mining) still reflects the endurance of pre-war patrimonial relationships, subverts fair access to and control of the nation's resources and threatens prospects for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction (Maconachie 2012; SIPRI 2008). The current system is just reproducing the effects of the previous system and youth marginalisation is again a key issue in Sierra Leone.

2.4   Youth marginalisation

The country has a population of 5.9 million, one third of whom are between the ages of 15 and 35 years – the national definition of 'youth'.[22] Adolescents (15–19 years) represent 11 per cent of the total population, youth (20–24-year-olds) 8 per cent and young adults (25–35 years) 15 per cent. About 44 per cent of the population are below the age of 15. The Joint Vision for Sierra Leone of the UN Family (2009–2012) states how youth still remain marginalised – over 60 per cent are unemployed (UNIPSIL 2009).

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[19] Based on field research in Sierra Leone, February 2013.

[20] London Mining is a multinational company founded in 2005 to acquire, finance and develop mines for the global steel industry. In Sierra Leone, its activities are focusing on the expansion of the Marampa mine.

[21] Two people were killed after workers at the Koidu diamond mining protested in December 2012 over bonus payments (Reuters 2012). One person was killed when police fired on workers protesting about low wages and unfair treatment at African Minerals' (AML) Bumbuna mine on April 18 2012 (Amnesty International 2012). In 2010, at another AML site on the outskirts of Bumbuna, villagers were beaten and harassed after they protested the sale of their land by the paramount chief (Peters and Richards 2011).

[22] See www.undp.org/content/sierraleone/en/home/countryinfo/

Youth in Sierra Leone face high rates of inactivity and underemployment. Those who do have jobs often have poor working conditions with long hours and low pay. The vast majority, though, have little chance of finding a secure job as many missed out on education because of the conflict and so do not have the requisite qualifications to fill positions. Public sector employment opportunities are very competitive and therefore tend to exclude youth on the basis of qualifications and experience.[23]

Employment opportunities have also been restricted because of the limited capacity of the private sector and a generally difficult economic environment, exacerbated by the global economic crisis. Creating job opportunities for the large and growing number of young women and men was not clearly identified and articulated in the second generation Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (SLPRSP), 'An Agenda for Change', even though identified as one of the country's major development challenges and central to maintaining peace, stability and promoting pro-poor growth and reducing poverty. However, the latest PRSP paper, 'Agenda for Prosperity', makes it a central tenet.

Many young people are also excluded from education. A recent study undertaken in Sierra Leone showed that young people believed that the leading cause of secondary school dropouts was poverty (Chipika 2012). Many young people simply could not afford to stay in education because of the cost of books, transport, uniforms and school fees. The study also cited several 'hidden fees' such as teachers charging for additional lessons or marking assignments and fees for retaking examinations if failing the first time. In the case of young people in rural communities, the long distances to and from school, often by foot, also contributed to dropouts. In the case of girls, there was evidence of parental preference for sending sons to school rather than daughters, especially in more rural and peri-urban areas. The poor quality of secondary school education, exacerbated by a lack of qualified teachers, high class numbers and lack of basic materials and equipment, also caused many young people to lose interest in school and subsequently drop out.

Uneducated youth in conditions of abject poverty and without any economic prospects have been shown to be susceptible to manipulations by influential people bent on causing chaos, as in the 2002 and 2007 election violence (Drew and Ramsbotham 2012; Africa Research Institute 2011; Shepler 2010; Srivastava and Larizza 2011). In 2009, the UN Secretary-General said that unemployment remained the most severe concern in Sierra Leone's post-conflict stability, and that urgent action was needed to create employment opportunities to reduce 'the lingering effects of the marginalisation of the country's young people who constitute the largest segment of the population' (UNSC 2009). With the influx of illicit drugs from South America into West Africa, specifically cocaine to Guinea Bissau, the UN advocated for an 'unorthodox' strategy, such as spending on major infrastructure projects to provide large-scale employment to disaffected youth (UNIPO 2009: 3).

Michael von der Schulenburg, the former Secretary-General's executive representative and head of UNIPSIL, noted in March 2010 that there had been relatively few tangible programmes to make a significant impact on the lives of the sizeable number of jobless young people (UN 2010). This has been attributed in part to a lack of funding, but also to a failure to develop long-term youth employment approaches, despite economic and social integration of the youth being one of the four programmatic priorities of the Joint Vision – the development strategy of the UN. International donors have only slowly awakened to the need to address the development needs of young people. The Joint Response to Youth Employment, which was elaborated in 2010, is a joint initiative between the UN and three other major donors – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the

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[23] Most of the working age youths are either uneducated or not skilled and could therefore not compete fairly with others that are qualified.

EU and the World Bank – and the government of Sierra Leone and local counterparts.[24] The ultimate goal of the Joint Response is to promote sustainable long-term development that sustains productive employment for young women and men, promotes gender equality and integrates marginalised groups such as the disabled and ex-combatants.[25]

The strategy has three parallel programmes targeting short-, medium- and long-term issues. In the short term 'massive employment' is being generated through investment in public infrastructure and cash for work programmes. The medium term includes building capacity among local business associations and technical colleges to identify and develop the skills necessary for employment. And in the long term, partners work with national institutions to build capacity to plan, coordinate and monitor a youth and employment strategy.

The creation of the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) in 2006/2007, followed later by establishment of the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) in 2009, will hopefully provide better integration of youth issues in development planning. A member of the Youth Commission explained,

> We in the Youth Commission have been very mindful about this transition from conflict to peace and are aware of the fact that it had to be handled with the greatest care if it should not take us back to the war (i.e. if the causes of the past war are not addressed – youth marginalisation and social exclusion, lack of space for youths and women, youth unemployment, etc.).

The Youth Commission is now finally alert to the need to build youth self-esteem and promote their voice in policy spaces. They have set up youth advisory committees and empowered them to manage and monitor projects within the community. However, the relationship between the Ministry of Employment, Youth and Sports and the National Youth Commission (NYC) is becoming a concern. According to Dumbuya (2012), students[26] went on strike since they felt the institutions were fighting each other (in terms of their roles and resources) instead of fighting unemployment. The youth seem to have some reasonable degree of confidence in the following youth-serving agencies (SLYEO, CCYA, HELP-SL, etc.)[27] and these could be used as an entry point to resolving the apparent tensions between these two governmental agencies. In fact, the 2005 National Youth Policy and the 2009 National Youth Commission Act have a number of overlaps in responsibility, authority and other major jurisdictional issues between both institutions, thereby creating misunderstanding and conflicts between them.

Overall, despite much of the rhetoric by the international community, the government and political parties in terms of youth marginalisation, discourses and policies are not matched with funding priorities. Ahead of the 2012 elections, a news report said funds earmarked to address youth issues accounted for less than two per cent of the government's 2011 budget, despite the prominence afforded youth issues by candidates (Oatley and Thapa 2012). On the UN side, while the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) have provided US$34.5 million for 19 projects in Sierra Leone, projects linked to the fourth PBF priority of youth empowerment and employment make up just five per cent of the portfolio.[28]

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[24] Joint Response to Youth Employment in Sierra Leone. Outline of the Joint Response, 2010–2012.

[25] *Ibid*.: 2.

[26] These were mainly secondary school students in Freetown who had easy access to the NYC and could express their grievances. They are mostly aged 12–18 years and all of these took place in the run-up to the multi-tier elections in Sierra Leone between June and August, 2012.

[27] Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation; Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities; Hands Empowering the Less Privileged in Sierra Leone.

[28] http://doc.iiep.unesco.org/wwwisis/repdoc/E031883.pdf

2.5 Conclusion Part I

Overall, one can see that both from a political and an economic point of view, the structures of power have not been transformed despite the key reforms initiated by donors. Already in 2008, the International Crisis Group warned that, 'In a very real sense, the conditions that spawned the war and inflicted gruesome casualties on Sierra Leone's citizens have not disappeared' (ICG 2008). Decentralisation did not devolve power to those who had been excluded, but rather created a new stratum of elites. It has become a tool of the central government rather than an institution accountable and responsive to the local populace (Mokuwa *et al.* 2011). Economic and political control in Sierra Leone remains in the hands of a few elite in Freetown who have connections above all else to the government (Brown *et al.* 2006). Power and patronage derives from their ability to accumulate and accommodate networks of elites and leaders. The leaders of the SLPP and the APC are much the same as before the conflict. It is interesting to note that the SLPP's candidate for the 2012 presidential elections was Maada Boi, the military head who launched a coup in 1996. While decentralisation has meant that the government is more present in the countryside, and that women and to a lesser extent youth are involved through representatives both in local councils and political parties, by and large, these amount only to window dressing (Jackson 2007). Most of the important decisions are still made by older men in Freetown (Cubitt 2012).

This raises important questions, as the political and economic situation is not very different compared to before the outbreak of the civil war. It is therefore important to discuss what impact conflict prevention policies are having on new forms of violence. This issue is particularly relevant as the international community, in particular the UN, is devising its own exit strategy.

3 Conflict prevention policies, exit strategies and local violence

Peacebuilding in post-war Sierra Leone has been successful insofar as it has prevented a relapse into widespread violent conflict. Yet this overlooks many challenges that still threaten a renewal of conflict in the country, including youth marginalisation and unemployment, leading to street gangs and crime, disputes over land rights and the benefits of natural minerals, labour disputes especially with mining companies, drug trafficking and the proliferation of small arms due to the country's porous borders (NAN 2012).

Given the issues raised in the political and historical analysis in our first section, the withdrawal of the UN mission poses some real risks in terms of political instability and the lack of attention to pressing post-conflict issues, such as youth employment and the emergence of new forms of violence.

3.1 No more conflict but no reconciliation?

Sierra Leone has certainly managed a successful transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. The most important conflict prevention policy was the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme – cash and skills training in exchange for weapons. The DDR programme in fact was one of the cornerstones of the 2001 externally imposed peace agreement.

The DDR in Sierra Leone has received mixed evaluations. Jackson (2007), for example, said that a large number of ex-combatants did not benefit from the programme and its exclusionary nature. Le Billon (2012) also noted that the programme excluded many young people who had been part of the conflict, including those who did not have weapons (perhaps because they had already handed them to their commanders), or those who did not fight but were equally traumatised, such as couriers, drivers, cooks and sex slaves.

Jackson (2007) further criticised the way in which donors have focused on 'numbers' without looking at the healing process that a country needs to go through. It also took a long time to reach some of the more remote areas, and there was no effective monitoring. In the end, many youth received nothing and either returned to their homes, fearful of retribution or went to diamond mining areas, or urban areas to find work, where they were equally vulnerable to recruitment.

The DDR process was externally led and focused on the removal of guns, but not on the rehabilitation of the ex-combatants. Below are a few thoughts that were shared about the DDR process.[29]

> Because many of these kids came back with mental problems, they turned to crime.
>
> There was no local ownership of this project.
>
> Many of the ex-combatants were just given money; they didn't have to do anything to earn the jobs, so they went back to crime.

More importantly, most participants in our workshop believed that the reconciliation process did not work and that there are still tensions between the local communities and ex-

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[29] In a recent workshop in Freetown organised jointly by IDS and the Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA – Sierra Leone) in February 2013.

combatants. During the DDR process GoSL, with the support of the international community, decided to set up both the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Special Court focused on violations of international law and thus far 13 individuals have been indicted for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other violations of international humanitarian law. The remit of the Reconciliation Commission was broader; its mandate was to:

> create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law related to the armed conflict in Sierra Leone, from the beginning of the conflict in 1991 to the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement; to address impunity, to respond to the needs of the victims, to promote healing and reconciliation and to prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered.
>
> (Truth and Reconciliation Act, 2000, section 6, subsection 1)

The Commission operated from November 2002 to October 2004. However, this Commission did not benefit from a strong political momentum, meaning there was inadequate support for the report and its recommendations, so there was no framework for the healing process within communities following the report's publication (Dougherty 2004).

The DDR and the reconciliation process were followed by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper that made security and development the cornerstone of the strategy. Sierra Leone was one of the first countries to link security with development, as expressed in its first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP1), pillar 1. Security sector reform (SSR) was also a key aspect of peacebuilding and was widely acclaimed as successful (Horn, Olonisakin & Peake 2006) but there are a number of elements that are still to be addressed if the gains made are to be maintained. For one, the limits of an externally driven SSR programme have been stressed by Gbla in an article which called for more local ownership of the process (Gbla 2006). In a recent interview with Professor Gbla, he emphasised that without a regional DDR programme, 'ambassadors of conflict' (former combatants) in the region could easily be remobilised, especially due to high youth unemployment in the region and porous borders.

The second PRSP, the 'Agenda for Change' strategy, was initiated by President Koroma in 2008. At the same time, the UN Joint Vision was articulated by the United Nations Integrated Peace Building Office in Sierra Leone. The UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone tries to address four key elements that bring security and development together:

- The economic integration of rural areas into the national economy;
- The economic and social integration of youth;
- Equitable and affordable access to healthcare;
- Accessible and credible public services.

All these policies have been successful in creating a stable environment and it may be the time for the international community to transition and exit from the country, or is too late?

3.2 Exit strategy and donor dependency

The international community has been omnipresent in the country, especially Freetown, for the last 13 years. Devising an appropriate exit strategy has vexed the UN and other international agencies for decades. Leave too soon, and the country could collapse; stay too long and you promote an ethos of dependency. Although the UN has been gradually shifting and adapting its missions, it remains to be seen whether Sierra Leone has not already entered a culture of dependency. The war was ended by the international community and donors were heavily involved in the political settlement and continue to invest considerable amounts in the country as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Major economic indicators for Sierra Leone (2009–2011)

	2009	2010	2011
Receipts			
Net ODA (US$ m)	448	467	429
Net ODA/GNI (%)	24.1	24.4	19.7
Bilateral share (gross ODA)	44	42	42
Net private flows (US$ m)	12	–13	7
Further information			
Population (m)	5.7	5.9	6.0
GNI per capita (Atlas US$)	340	340	340

Note: Atlas, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlas_method

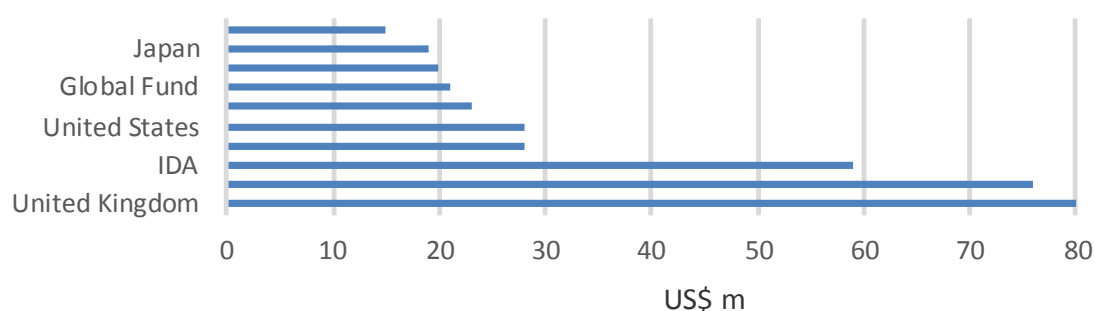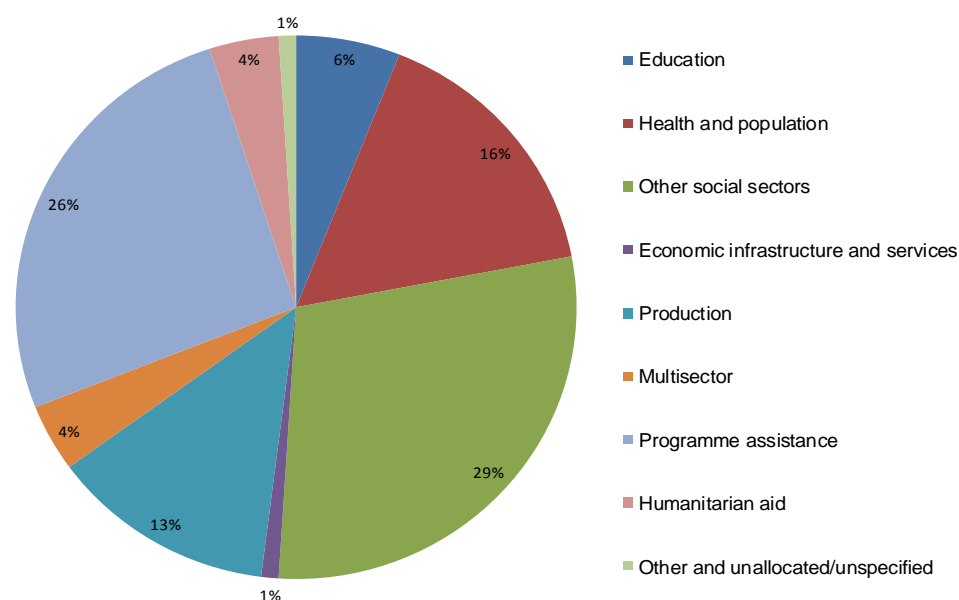## Figure 1: Top ten donors of gross ODA (2010–2011 average)

Figure 2: Bilateral ODA by sector (2010–2011)

Source: Adapted from www.oecd.org/dac/stats/SLE.gif

In some ways, this will not be the first exit strategy for the UN in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone has been an important laboratory for UN interventions and thinking in terms of peacebuilding and exit strategies. In 2005, when UNAMSIL's mandate expired, it was also the first mission to use benchmarks to guide its departure, which were based on the government's ability to maintain external and internal security (Caplan 2012). UNIPSIL replaced UNIOSL (United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone) in 2008.

3.3 Containing electoral violence: A good indicator for exit?

The exit strategy of the UN Peacebuilding Mission, and more largely the transition strategy of the international community in considering Sierra Leone as a low-income country rather than a 'fragile and conflict-affected' one, has been benchmarked in the light of the 2012 elections. This can be explained by the fact that most of the most important violent incidents in Sierra Leone in the post-war context have been linked to elections.

Violence has followed the cycles of local and national elections, spiking in 2002–2003 and again in 2007–2008, with dozens injured in Freetown and Kono (Dowd and Raleigh 2012). Ahead of the 2007 election campaign, political parties released high-ranking former combatants from jail and employed them as 'task squads' (Africa Research Institute 2011; Christensen and Utas 2008).[30] Many former combatants joined because they felt they had nothing left, some had been rejected by their families, had failed to gain anything in the DDR process and found a sense of 'family' among their former comrades. Politicians have exploited this lack of purpose for the youth in election-related violence that uses many former combatants (Drew and Ramsbotham 2012; Africa Research Institute 2011; Srivastava and Larizza 2011). High levels of violence against civilians in 2008 coincided with the local council elections. In March 2009, there was a new round of violence; the SLPP headquarters was attacked after five days of clashes between supporters of the two main parties in Freetown, Kenema, Gendema and Pujehun District. Finally, a December 2010 local council by-election in Kono was preceded by 'incidents of political violence and intolerance'. The SLPP office in Koidu City, and buildings associated with APC officials, were vandalised. Senior SLPP officials, including two presidential candidates and the deputy minority leader of parliament, sustained injuries in attacks allegedly carried out by APC supporters (Africa Research Institute 2011).

By-elections for vacant parliamentary and local council seats were successfully conducted by the National Electoral Commission between March and June 2010. While most were held in a peaceful environment, a parliamentary by-election in Pujehun District was marked by tension and allegations that both SLPP and APC had resorted to the use of ex-combatants to intimidate the electorate. Other incidents linked to political campaigns again occurred in Koidu, Kono district, in September 2011.

Violence mitigation strategies and programmes had been focusing on the 2012 elections. The Non State Actors programme, part of an Electoral Basket Fund (EBF) and managed by UNDP, provided a forum for actors from traditional, social, religious, civic and other institutions to commit to political neutrality and promote tolerance and non-violence. These activities were successful as they involved student organisations, artists and musicians – two of Sierra Leone's most prominent adversarial rap artists, Kao Denero and LAJ, were appointed Sierra Leone Peace Ambassadors.

There were a number of activities targeting vulnerable groups, in particular ex-combatants, youth and students. Sport, especially football, was used in the Mapaki chiefdom and in Waterloo as a way to promote tolerance. In Waterloo, ex-combatants organised a four-day soccer competition at the Bassa Town football field (5th–13th May 2012). The soccer competition targeted 11 communities of ex-combatants within the Waterloo community. Debates and quiz competitions were also used as another way to promote tolerance. Debates were organised at Fourah Bay College by two organisations – Young Women in University Politics and the Peace and Conflict Studies–Peace Society. The Anti-Violence

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[30] Koroma hired Idrissa Kamara, a former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council commander known as Leatherboot, and mid-ranking former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) fighters to join his personal security unit. Solomon Berewa (SLPP candidate) engaged Hassan Bangura, or Bomblast, also a former AFRC commander who became second-in-command of the West Side Boys. The People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) was backed by the *Kamajors* (Africa Research Institute 2011).

Movement (AVM) in collaboration with the Centre for Coordination of Youth Affairs (CCYA) held a debate and quiz competition at the Government Model Senior Secondary School in Freetown on 7 June 2012.[31] The event was attended by 84 students from 19 secondary schools within Freetown. Similar events were organised by the AVM at the British Council. The Sierra Leone police also introduced peace clubs in strategic secondary schools, such as those notorious for causing violence – Saint Edwards, Government Rokel Secondary School, Albert Academy, Government Model Secondary School and Ahmadiyya Secondary School. The then Minister of Internal Affairs, Musa Tarawalli, also invited all the heads of the cults in schools, ghettos and on the streets to a meeting, and encouraged them to publicly denounce violence and carry out a symbolic burning of knives, bottles, truncheons and other weapons. All these activities were helpful in preventing violence during the electoral cycle. As a result, the elections were held in a positive and safe climate and the international community considered that this was a key milestone for both the exit strategy of the UN Peacebuilding Mission and the transition away from peacebuilding programmes in donors' strategies.

The Peacebuilding Commission, which made a fact-finding mission to Sierra Leone in February 2013, said the 2012 elections showed the country had crossed 'a threshold'. During a meeting of the UN Security Council, praise was given for the progress the country had made in the past 15 years.

Elections have been used as the key standard by which to guide a mission's departure. A democratically elected government was believed to be one that practised good governance, valued peace and respected human rights, and UN peacekeepers were expected to leave within 15 days of elections being held (Hirschmann 2012). While elections are central to the work of peacebuilding, on their own they have not proven to be the panacea they were expected to be. In countries such as Rwanda and Angola, they actually polarised identities and helped to foment ethnic conflict (Caplan 2012; Hirschmann 2012; Zaum 2008). Many of the missions began to include a wide range of non-military, institution-building tasks, such as security sector reform, governance and rule of law (Hirschmann 2012). These were clearly part of the remit of the Sierra Leone mission. In the Sierra Leone case, the Integrated Mission Planning Process was intended to develop longer-term strategies that would help countries fully recover from conflict. The Brahimi panel highlighted a role for development activities designed to achieve long-term stability and said 'peacekeeping has no exit without peacebuilding work' (Hirschmann 2012). In the case of Sierra Leone, to what extent is the peacebuilding mission finished?

Although the containment of electoral-related violence has been successful, the security situation is far from being stable, with emerging new forms of violence (see below). There is therefore caution around the UNIPSIL exit strategy. As stated by Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski of Canada, who is also chair of the Sierra Leone Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, 'now is not the time for the international community to turn away from Sierra Leone'. In the same tone, the UN Peacebuilding Mission also warned during a visit to Sierra Leone in February 2013 that the country stood 'on a pivot between stability and instability'. Its 'winner-takes-all' style of politics was fomenting regional divisions, with supporters for the SLPP in the south and the All People's Congress in the north. The mission also raised more immediate concerns, such as the high rate of youth unemployment, which it said was the country's largest threat, and the issues of transitional and organised crime. Sierra Leone would continue to need international support for some time to come, it said.[32] This therefore raises important questions in terms of transition and an exit strategy. However, as we will now see, most conflict prevention policies have not focused on the emerging new forms of violence.

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[31] The AVM and CCYA held similar events in Bo, Kenema and Kono during the same month.

[32] www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/cscs/sl/pbc_visits/Report%20of%20the%20PBC%20Delegation%20Visit%20to%20Sierra%20Leone%20-%20Feb%202013.pdf

3.4   Emerging forms of violence

In 2012, the Action on Armed Violence (AOAV 2012) conducted a household survey assessing the perception of armed violence in Sierra Leone. According to this report, nearly a quarter of a million Sierra Leoneans experience different forms of violence each year (predominantly interpersonal violence, economically motivated and gender-based violence) and over 43 per cent of these victims experience violence with weapon use. Of course, these figures need to be taken with caution as these have been calculated on the basis of the extrapolation of victimisation rates to the general population. Another report in 2012, by the Sierra Leone Office for National Security (ONS), identified some of the following vulnerabilities for Sierra Leone, pointing out how the country was vulnerable to organised crime and terrorism, lawlessness and youth crime, and illegal immigration.

Box 1: Key vulnerabilities for Sierra Leone, 2012 Security Sector Reform report (ONS 2012)

1. **Weak capacity of the security sector institutions**: The current capabilities of security sector institutions, including the police and armed forces, to adequately respond to existing, emerging and future threats to Sierra Leone are grossly at variance with their required capabilities. Transforming the security sector would also lay a firm basis for sustainable economic development.
2. **Uncontrollable immigration**: The relatively stable and investor-friendly atmosphere reigning in the country in addition to the growth in the agriculture, mining and other sectors serve as a magnet that attracts people from across the region.
3. **Environmental degradation and pollution**: One of the most perilous consequences of the civil war in Sierra Leone is the irreparable damage to the environment. During the war and in the immediate post-war period, there was a massive assault on the environment through cutting down trees and saplings as sources of energy and income, and unregulated and uncontrolled mining companies in some local communities have exposed inhabitants of those communities and left them vulnerable to flooding and tropical storms. Another concern is the high influx of migrants of Arab-African origin into the country, often dressed in veils or turbans, posing as beggars.
4. **Terrorism:** Although there have been no acts of terrorism in Sierra Leone to date, the involvement of the Sierra Leone Armed forces in the African Union Peacekeeping force in Somalia puts them at risk of retribution from Al Shebaab. The possibility of radical Islam gaining roots in Sierra Leone, though remote, should be accorded due consideration. Also, as a result of our vast mineral resources, there exists the likelihood for international sponsors of terrorism to penetrate our shores in the guise of potential investors to trade in our resources and then use the proceeds thereof to fund terrorist activities.
5. **Organised criminal activities:** The post-conflict situation in Sierra Leone has seen an influx of economic migrants engaged in illegal activities like money laundering, human trafficking, illegal printing of currency notes. Organised criminal gangs are venturing into Sierra Leone due to pervasive poverty, get-rich-quick mentality and desperation of the locals who end up providing vital information and cover for these criminals.
6. **Weak national disaster management and coordination mechanism**: The effectiveness of the Disaster Management Department (DMD) of the Office for National Security (ONS) to coordinate the management of and response to disaster-related threats is affected by weak financial, material and human resource capacity; weak cooperation of partners at operational level; inaccessibility to remote disaster-affected communities and poor communication networks leading to delays in information dissemination.

Security sector reform is still an important policy priority for donors, especially the UK government agencies, mainly through the conflict pool funds (jointly operated by the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and DFID). In terms of police reforms, DFID, as part of the Access to Security and Justice Project (ASJP),[33] supports the local policing partnership boards, which are comprised of police officers and civilians within local communities and are normally chaired by Local Unit Commanders (LUC) who are in charge of the local area. They respond to local community policing demands and meet at regular intervals to address the policing needs of their respective communities. In terms of military activities, this role was performed by the International Military Training and Advisory Team Sierra Leone (IMATT). This institution is now replaced by ISAT (the International Security Advisory Team,[34] which will work with UNDP to advise security-related institutions. ISAT will have a much broader remit across the whole security sector and a growing role in the West Africa region (Shearn 2013).

The key vulnerabilities identified in this report perhaps neglect the two most destabilising factors affecting Sierra Leone right now, namely youth unemployment and the intensification of large-scale investments in marginal rural areas. These effects can largely be correlated with the new emerging forms of violence.

In terms of urban violence, the post-conflict security landscape in Sierra Leone is threatened by a wave of generalised lawlessness, indiscipline and violence, especially among the urban youth (Shepler 2010). Participants at a workshop in Freetown, the capital, observed that a majority of Sierra Leoneans have lost respect for the rule of law in an environment characterised by high rates of unemployment among especially violent-prone, poor and unskilled youth and the development of cliques, gangs and cults in schools, colleges and communities.[35] New forms of urban violence, especially in the east and central parts of Freetown, have been linked to competing music artists (*Sierra Express Media* 2010), and this led to the development of a new gang war culture, as well as the formation of gangs or cults in secondary schools, universities and colleges (Utas 2009). In April 2013, fan clubs of two rival music labels clashed in Freetown, using stones, bottles, knives and sharpened sticks. In a separate recent development, an album launch was cancelled by the police after a pre-launch rally turned violent, with fans stealing handbags and mobile phones, breaking car windscreens, and even stabbing fans of a rival music label. In universities and colleges (such as Fourah Bay College or the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology in the Western Area of Freetown), these gangs start as sororities and fraternities and end up as cults, usually called 'black man' and 'white man'. The black and white man culture is sometimes looked at from the perspective of student politics only but, in reality, it is national politics being put to the test (that is, the black man represents the ruling APC party while the white man represents the opposition, the SLPP). Control of students (and the Student Union) has been a major strategy of successive governments in keeping order and stability. However, violence sometimes erupts at universities and tertiary institutions, partly due to their division into camps aligned along national political lines, as well as the attempt by some state functionaries to influence the outcome of student elections. Initiation into student cult groups sometimes also results in violent activities. Hence, the threats remain potent.

In rural areas, the key issues relate to land rights. In Sierra Leone's diamond mining regions, the youth assert what they consider to be their personal rights to dispose of real property at the expense of older practices that subject property to the dictates and interests of 'customary authorities', regarded by many as corrupt. In the Tonkolili District, an area in the Northern Province that is thought to have the largest iron ore deposit in Africa and the third

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[33] ASJP is a follow-up to the Justice Sector Development Project (JSDP).

[34] Their mandate started on 1 April, 2013.

[35] 30 January, 2013, Kona Lodge, Freetown.

largest in the world, violent protests in 2012 rocked the region, centreing on Bumbuna, the site of a government-owned hydropower dam as well as mines. Tensions began when miners downed tools in protest at poor pay and working conditions in the mines. Local residents joined the miners in demonstrations, which led to one person being killed and several others being severely injured. Similar incidents have taken place in Tongo Fields, Lunsar and Makeni, where iron ore and other minerals are being mined, as illustrated in the previous section.

Donors have not been directly addressing urban and rural violence but have developed a number of key programmes in relation to these issues, namely institutions focusing on the youth and youth unemployment. The creation of institutions that would represent and give voice to youth concerns has been a key priority for international donors, in particular DFID, the EU and UNIPSIL. UNIPSIL spent approximately US$3m to set NAYCOM up (but now has ended its support). It is also supporting the All Political Party Youth (APPYA) to campaign against violence in communities and within the political parties themselves. The EU has put a lot of emphasis on decentralisation, in particular supporting programmes to empower women and youth at the local level.[36] DFID, on the other hand, has been supporting civil society groups and institutions that work on youth issues. DFID provided grants to ENCISS[37] and support capacity building of civil society organisations (CSOs) and local councils. Several CSOs have already received grants from ENCISS, and these include some youth groups.

The other key focus has been on youth unemployment. DFID, for example, has been contributing to the basket fund at UNDP for youth employment creation.[38] DFID is also about to support a new project called 'Making Markets Work for the Poor' that will look at value chains, from production to sale. It is expected that a reasonable number of youth will benefit from this intervention. As companies cannot find people with the requisite technical and professional skills for their operations nationally, DFID has brought in a private sector adviser, whose main duty is to help develop the local content policy and also try to encourage companies to use resources within Sierra Leone and as a result create employment for Sierra Leoneans.

Another key programme has been run by the GIZ. This is the only donor that has made youth unemployment an integral focus of its programmes.[39] It concentrates on rural areas in the districts of Kailahun, Koinadugu and Kono – districts that were badly affected by the war. This is handled though the 'Employment Promotion Programme' (EPP), which pursues an integrated approach to employment by increasing the demand for labour (economic development), improving the supply (training young workers), and coordinating supply and demand (matching).[40] This is done through agricultural development and provides capacity building and tools for unemployed youth to return to their homes in rural areas. This policy is intended to promote youth employment but also to facilitate reconciliation and reintegration. It is based on the idea that employment leads to social and political stability. This support is contributing to conflict prevention as it is providing a reasonable number of jobs for

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[36] Sierra Leone – European Commission Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme, 2008–2013.

[37] The ENCISS programme is an initiative of UKaid and the EU aimed at improving accountability and strengthening citizens' voice, participation in decision-making and access to information.

[38] DFID Sierra Leone, Operational Plan 2011–2015.

[39] In the past GIZ has also supported NAYCOM by providing some money for their operations and advocating and lobbying with the government to approve the national youth policy in collaboration with the Ministries of Labour and Agriculture with support from the ILO, the World Bank and the UNDP.

[40] Their main focus is on employment creation for young people along agricultural value chains in rice, cocoa, coffee and small ruminants and the support of informal and formal capacity building along the three value chains in three districts (Kenema, Kailahun and Koinadugu). They work closely with a number of line ministries including the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), Ministry of Trade and Industries, and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and to a reasonable extent with the private sector.

vulnerable and disenfranchised youth in three peripheral, flashpoint districts in Sierra Leone.[41] However, a criticism of this project has been that the role of youth in the conflict in Sierra Leone was not simply about unemployment (Smith 2011). Other factors such as lack of voice, frustration with customary power relations and lack of political engagement were also identified as factors that will not be addressed simply by the creation of skills and opportunities. This is a more challenging proposition and suggests that peacebuilding analysis should include strategies to develop forms of youth engagement that raise awareness about the political economy and environment in which job opportunities are being developed (Smith 2011).

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[41] All three districts have been identified as flashpoints by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and other security stakeholders.

4   Conclusion and recommendations

Over the past 15 years, international donors have played a pivotal role in the direction Sierra Leone has taken since it first erupted in violence in 1991. Security has been restored, combatants demobilised, investment increased and three rounds of democratic elections held. Yet these reforms do not seem to have improved the quality of life for the majority of Sierra Leoneans, especially young people. The youth had already been excluded by the formal and informal institutions of the single-party state before the war, and the focus of the international community on institution-building after the war simply left them out on the margins again. This frustration is manifesting as violence, in the mining communities, on the streets and even in schools.

Serious efforts are needed to address the youth situation, especially the issues of unemployment and violence, and more than mere institution-building.[42] Young people in Sierra Leone are standing on a divide, with one foot planted in the mire of a bloody 11-year-long war from which they have just emerged, and the other slowly edging its way toward the more secure ground of a newly established peace. They hesitate, contemplating the move, unconvinced that what lies ahead is better than where they have been. Memories of the brutal war that began in 1991, in which they played a major part as child soldiers, make them wary of promises of safe, solid ground ahead. Their experience of adult manipulation and betrayal makes them distrustful. Moreover, the choice of committing to peace is not theirs alone but also that of the adults on whom the young people of Sierra Leone depend – the government of Sierra Leone, communities, families and international agencies – to make sure that peace for young people means more than the end of armed conflict. We therefore make the following recommendations.

4.1   Youth employment and empowerment

Employment has taken a back seat to security issues over the past decade, and only now is being given the focus it deserves. In 2010, the head of UNIPSIL said there had not been enough programmes to make an impact on youth unemployment. Lack of funding and adequate youth employment approaches were to blame.

At the moment, most of the youth employment programmes focus on providing youth with work opportunities in agriculture in rural areas. While this is an important aspect of the country's development, it will not suit all individuals and there have to be opportunities for those who do not want to work in agriculture. Many youth want to remain in the urban areas where they have been since the end of the war.

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[42] The 'Agenda for Prosperity' (2013–2017), the new poverty reduction strategy paper, focuses on 'inclusive growth', specifying bringing underemployed and unemployed youth, women and other marginalised people into the mainstream. Some of the ideas it has flagged for inclusive growth include providing entry for young people into the financial system so they can start businesses, and providing more targeted technical and vocation training programmes. Other key goals include: strengthening decentralised political structures for youth, such as the national youth commission; establishing a Youth Enterprise Fund; establishing centres of excellence for youth to showcase their successes and raising the profile of youth role models in the agricultural sector; improving youth access to and understanding of new agricultural technology and production; and establishing agricultural cooperatives for the youth, encouraging young women and men, including disadvantaged groups such as persons living with disability to use improved technology in value chain development. The 'Agenda for Prosperity' also highlights the lack of adequate knowledge about the market in Sierra Leone. Employment information and communication are not effective due to a dearth of employment centres. Obsolete labour laws and the not yet implemented National Employment Policy have further compounded the problem. It also suggests establishing a National Volunteer Service Corps as a mechanism for enhancing employment opportunities for inexperienced youth.

More employment should be generated through investment in industry, and that means a renewed focus on power generation. The 'Agenda for Prosperity' needs to have clear, robust targets for youth employment, as currently its methods for including youth in the economic development of the country are ambiguous.

GoSL and the international community should recognise the youth as Sierra Leone's most precious resource, crucial to the reconstruction, peacebuilding and stability of their country. They should increase their support for the National Youth Commission and the Ministry for Youth Affairs for targeted, holistic protection and assistance programmes that address multiple needs and vulnerabilities amongst the youth.

GoSL should develop national policies and legal frameworks that protect and promote the rights of youth. Young people should be actively involved in decision-making, monitoring and enforcement of these tools for protection, which will help to decrease the marginalisation that fuelled the conflict. The government should as a matter of urgency review the National Youth Policy and the National Youth Commission Act 2009 to reflect existing realities. Donors should support capacity building for government, youth organisations and youth-serving agencies to help structures to ensure the success and sustainability of this work.

4.2 Resource extraction and revenue distribution

Conflict over land and labour rights and the perceived mismanagement of revenues from natural resources is increasing and often, but not always, youth-led. The government needs to strengthen adherence to mining laws, especially community development articles in the Mining and Minerals Act 2009 and taxation clauses.

Mining companies should publish in national and local newspapers what they pay to chiefs, district councils and MPs, especially those amounts that are earmarked for development. Public awareness of what has been paid and what development promises have been made will lead to greater accountability. In this respect, GoSL should take all the necessary steps to rejoin the EITI.

The EITI Board asked Sierra Leone to complete four remedial actions for the suspension to be lifted, namely that (1) all relevant companies and government entities participate in the reporting process; (2) disclosures from government entities are based on accounts audited to international standards; (3) the government ensures that all material companies comprehensively disclose all material payments in accordance with the agreed reporting templates; and finally (4) the government ensures that all government agencies comprehensively disclose all material revenues in accordance with the agreed reporting templates. These corrective actions could be addressed by publishing a supplementary 2010 EITI Report, or through the 2011 EITI Report to be published before 31 December 2013.

At the same time, the government should not rely on companies to be the sole agent of development in the regions in which they operate. This becomes especially important as Sierra Leone develops its other natural resources – iron ore, gold and oil. The government needs to set a clear precedent for mining company activities. The creation of the National Mining Agency earlier this year is a good start, but the agency should make sure it represents the people, and not the mining companies.

Mining companies should not use police as their private security guards as this creates a conflict of interest. Sierra Leone police are supposed to support citizens, not be against them. Companies need to hire their own guards, from reputable organisations, that should abide by the law.

4.3   Divisive politics

The winner-takes-all nature of Sierra Leone's politics is causing national divisions that are spilling over into schools and onto the street. Building on successful experiences to date, there should be more focus on activities that build peace, such as intergroup sports activities and peace clubs that reward schools for peaceful term times.

GoSL and donors should respond to youth's call for education as the linchpin of their recovery and should make the reconstruction of formal and non-formal education systems and the promotion of youth's livelihoods and entrepreneurship a priority. The government and key development organisations should immediately identify critical skills needed for the development and reconstruction of Sierra Leone, fund and link skills training for youth to these activities and employ young people to undertake the required tasks. The lack of educational opportunities is their number one problem and they name formal schooling and skills and entrepreneurship training as the main solution. Without education, many feel hopeless and at times turn to more destructive behaviours.

In the light of these three challenges that are linked to emerging new forms of violence, the government of Sierra Leone and the international community should include conflict prevention as a core aid priority in the UNIPSIL exit strategy and donor transition strategies. This focus would entail maintaining the conditions for investment in youth employment and youth empowerment, expanding off-farm employment and encouraging accountability and transparency mechanisms in relation to resource extraction and revenue distribution.

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