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# A Village-Up View of Sierra Leone's Civil War and Reconstruction: Multilayered and Networked Governance

James B.M. Vincent

May 2012

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Cover photo: James B.M. Vincent/ICARDS

Photo caption: Rokupr Town, Kambia District, North Sierra Leone. The Councillor, representatives of his ward committee and local people are pouring concrete into a culvert reconnecting roads that had been out of use for a long time.

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# Summary

In Sierra Leone, as in most of Africa, states have not only a direct relationship with their citizens as individuals but also a mediated one through rural governance systems that usually pre-date colonialism and may have greater legitimacy than the central state itself. And these local governance structures generally persisted through the country's collapse and civil war more successfully than the central state did. This report therefore offers a 'bottom-up' review of the post-war reconstruction of the Sierra Leone state.

I have conducted research on these and related questions throughout the country since 1996. For the present study I have supplemented this experience with a qualitative data set based on my own unstructured interviews during 2010–11 in 38 communities in 28 chiefdoms in eight of the 12 districts in the three rural provinces of the country.

The impact of the civil war on human security and governance in the rural areas was devastating. Random killings, maiming and rape were widespread; food production as well as formal health and education services collapsed; and local chiefs and other representatives of the state were assassinated when they could be identified by the rebels.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the devastating impact of the war on human security, rural communities remained intact. The pre-war (traditional) leadership structures continued informally to provide whatever degree of governance response was possible. In the chiefdoms I visited, a third of the chiefs remained with their people (even if in hiding) throughout even the most difficult part of the civil war, and most of the rest fled only briefly. During the war chiefs made a major change to include youth and women in their governance practices and this more participatory approach to governance has persisted. Although a large number of chiefs died during the war period, their positions were easily refilled afterward.

During the war most communities in the South and East created local Civil Defence Forces (CDF) to defend themselves. Chiefs retained at least some degree of direction over 71 per cent of the CDF forces in the areas I visited, with the consequence that only a third of these CDFs gave trouble to their communities. Because of the abuses that did occur, however, CDF leaders were not able to challenge chiefs for community leadership after the war. In only 19 per cent of our study communities was there any challenge to the return of the traditional chiefs at the end of the war.

Despite the restoration of chieftaincy and its general popularity, there are three signs that the government was concerned about its lack of broad responsiveness before the war. First, elected district councils have been brought back. Second, chiefs also have to share their revenues with the Councils, which both find a major problem and source of tension. Third, the Native Administration (NA) courts also are in disarray. In the present day circumstance, most communities are now using the alternative dispute mechanisms created by donors as they are still afraid of the very high fines that the court chairmen used to levy. In addition the magistrates' courts are more accessible and extended. The consequences of the three changes are that the post-war chiefs seem to be more moral leaders than authoritative decision-makers and are much more responsive to their communities.

From the perspective of multi-levelled governance not only was NA changed by the war, but the role of international donors increased significantly as well. Donor impact was notable on Security Sector Reform (SSR), democratisation, decentralisation, and women's rights. And there were many large-scale international activities for humanitarian relief and development. Nonetheless, these initiatives have strengthened, not threatened, the legitimacy of the state because the army, police and health services have improved and as local citizens do not know how to access the donors directly they tend to credit their activities to various government actors.

The consequences of SSR are that the SL Police are much improved coming out of the war. But unlike the SL Army it would be a mistake to say that they have been wholly transformed. Also their presence is still thin. The SLP was still absent or barely present in 29 per cent of the areas I visited. The old 'tribal police' are needed but unpaid.

The various reforms that have come in the wake of the civil war are incomplete and the institutional boundaries of the newly reconstructed multilayered governance system are unclear. The result is that most of the component parts – chiefs, district councils, native administration and magistrates' courts, SL and NA Police, are not functioning as well as they might. Not enough attention has been paid to how governance at the 'periphery' is to be conducted.

**Keywords:** Security Sector Reform; Civil Defence Forces; civil war; multilayered; networked governance.

**James B.M. Vincent** is an Independent Consultant and Director of a small research group Integrated Community and Rural Development Services (ICARDS – SL), in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He is an experienced researcher and consultant on development and conflict-related issues in Sierra Leone and the Mano River region. He originally had training in agricultural education followed by a number of training courses in conflict studies. He has undertaken a wide range of different assignments for a variety of different International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), National NGOs, and donor and academic research institute clients across a broad spectrum of thematic areas (including *inter alia* rural livelihoods, local governance, community driven development and the needs of young people).

James is considered a leading authority on Sierra Leonean civil society and, in particular, the relationship between local NGOs and their international development partners. He has also participated in numerous evaluation studies and is an experienced facilitator of workshops. He is presently completing a Master of Arts in Development Studies at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex in the UK, a leading global charity for research, teaching and information on development, and is one of the key researchers of the Global Uncertainties project, led by Professor David Leonard.



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# Acronyms

ADB	African Development Bank
APC	All People's Congress Party
BMATT	British Military Assistance Training Team
CARE	Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe
CARITAS	Catholic International Charitable organisation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
CDU	Civil Development Units
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSB	corn soya beans
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DISEC	District Security Committees
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration
DO	District Officer (formerly District Commissioner)
DVU	Domestic Violence Unit of the SLP now called Family Support Unit
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group (the armed wing of The Economic Community of West African States)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFSL	Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone
FSU	Family Support Unit
GTZ	German Technical Assistance
ICARDS	Integrated Community and Rural Development Services
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IDP	internally displaced persons
INEC	Independent National Elections Commission
INGO	International Non-Governmental Association
IMATT	International Military Assistance Training Team
LNP	Local Needs Policing
MERLIN	Medical Emergency Relief International



MOCKY	Movement of Concerned Kono Youths
MP	Member of Parliament
MSF	Medicines Sans Frontières
NA	Native Administration
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action
NAP	Native Administration Police
NASMOS	National Social Mobilisation Secretariat
NCS	National Security Council
NFI	non-food items
NGO	Non-Governmental Association
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NSC	National Security Coordinator
NSC	National Security Council
ONS	Office of National Security
PC	Paramount Chief
PHU	Peripheral Health Unit
POW	Prisoner of War
PROSEC	Provincial Security Committees
RoCSAs	Rotational Savings and Credit Associations
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLAM	Sierra Leone Awareness Movement
SLBS	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service
SLG	Sierra Leone Government
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SSRP	Security Sector Reform Project
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WVI	World Vision International



# 1 Introduction

Sierra Leone is one of a number of states that underwent a period of civil war and collapse after the end of the Cold War (others in Africa include Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mozambique, and Somalia.) The international community has devoted considerable resources to the reconstruction of these states but often has found progress very difficult. Typically the focus of attention has been on restoring the structures of the central state – the army, the police, the national bureaucracy – improving their functioning and their ability to serve the citizenry. However, many of these states collapsed not only because they were not working well but also because they were exploiting their societies. Furthermore, in Africa most states have not only a direct relationship with their citizens as individuals but also a mediated one through rural governance systems that usually pre-date colonialism and may have greater legitimacy than the central state itself (Mamdani 1996; Oliver and Fage 1966). These local governance structures generally have persisted through the collapse and civil war more successfully than the central state has.

A set of questions thus arises: Has the international community erred in putting too much emphasis in reconstruction on building out and down from the central state? What role has been and could be played by local governance structures in recreating order and human security? How has the governance capacity of these local institutions been affected by the civil war? Has the sudden abundance of direct services from international providers itself destabilised state-locality-citizen relationships by adding yet another layer to governance? In short, does looking at rebuilding governance and human security from the village-up lead us to new insights and strategies for state reconstruction?

To answer these questions this report examines the experience of Sierra Leone from the start of its civil war in 1991 through to the present. I have conducted research on these and related questions throughout the country since 1996 – as research assistant (Peters 2011; Richards 1998; Richards and Vincent 2007), consultant (Albrecht and Jackson 2009; Kaldor 2006), and co-author (Richards and Vincent 2007). For the present study I have supplemented this experience with a qualitative data set based on my own unstructured interviews in 38 communities in 28 chiefdoms in eight<sup>1</sup> of the 12 districts in the three rural provinces of the country during 2010–11. This excludes preliminary meetings I had with various key stakeholders in the Western Area including key officials in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development Services, especially the Decentralisation Secretariat that handles the local government decentralisation programme and projects, Ministry of Internal Affairs (especially Senior Police officers), a number of former Ministers, civil society groups, legal practitioners and academics, heads of NGOs, senior politicians from both the ruling party and the opposition, retired civil servants, and some former ex-combatants.

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<sup>1</sup> The districts are: Eastern Province: Kenema and Kono; Northern Province: Bombali, Koinadugu and Kambia and Southern Province: Bo, Bonthe and Moyamba. See also map at end of report (Annex 1).

## 2 Background

There is a considerable literature on the causes of the Sierra Leone civil war and its history, which therefore does not need to be rehearsed again here (Abdullah and Mauna 1998; Gberie 1997; Keen 2005; Peters 2011; Richards 1998). I summarise only the key points that are relevant to this analysis.

The fundamental causes of the collapse of Sierra Leone were the civil war in Liberia and its export into Sierra Leone; and in good part in order to capture the revenues that were available from its alluvial diamond deposits/artisanal diamond fields (as emphasised in Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2000).

Nonetheless, the movement of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) into Sierra Leone was facilitated by four key features of the weak Sierra Leonean state:

- (i) A history of post-independence patronage and corruption that produced weakly-motivated and ineffective civil and military services;
- (ii) An army that proved easily corrupted and tempted by political power – so that its resistance to the rebels proved weak, leading to a coup, and then, when that was overturned, by most of its members defecting to the RUF (as ‘Sobels’ – *soldier rebels*);
- (iii) The Sierra Leone Police were remote from rural communities and were widely seen as corrupt and brutal; and
- (iv) In some parts of the country many young men were disaffected with their local chiefs, whom they felt were denying them access to the land and resources they would need to marry and establish families. These young men were easily recruited by the RUF and joined it in a brutal attack on the existing rural governance structures (especially the Native Administration and the SL Police).<sup>2</sup> (Richards 1998).

With these enabling conditions<sup>3</sup> the civil war began with the invasion of the country from Liberia by the RUF in March 1991. It was followed by a succession of coups, peace accords, elections and peacekeeping missions by Nigeria, the UN, and finally and most successfully by the United Kingdom in 2000, with the war usually seen as ending in 2002. The British were particularly active until 2007 in rebuilding the Sierra Leone military and police force.

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2 The denial of land was not necessarily absolute, for it was not always scarce. But in the Moyamba District, for example, youths had access to up to 3 acres of land to plant annual and biennial crops (generally for subsistence) but not perennials (which therefore precluded the more lucrative cash crops such as oil palm, cocoa or coffee, which would effectively give a long-term claim on the land). In the Kono and Tongo areas chiefs were very mindful about youth not being given long-term use-rights to land that might be found to have diamonds or gold. The chiefs’ in these cases preferred giving youths parcels of land that were barren or had been mined for several years.

3 Brown (2001) makes the distinction between enabling and precipitating conditions for violent conflict.

## 3 Coping with the war

### 3.1 The impact on human security

The war began in the Eastern Province, gradually spreading to the South and West and reaching the North quite late in the conflict. The RUF attacked not only local officials (especially chiefs) but also brutally killed, maimed and raped civilians who attracted the ire of its irregulars. Human insecurity involves not just stopping attacks on life and limb, however, but also assaults on resources and livelihoods on which communities are dependent. Here too the impact of the war was devastating.

Some communities resisted the rebels, whilst some just gave in, and others voluntarily joined to save the destruction of their property and killing of civilians by the RUF. There was no law and order in the country as a whole, so things started falling apart. The rebels began attacking villages and desecrating sacred bushes, raping women, and killing initiators, Paramount Chiefs (PCs) and lesser chiefs. *No one* wanted to be identified as ‘the chief’ as that meant you were going to die at any time there was an attack. The communities really protected their chiefs, however, as they refused to identify them to the rebels. The communities unofficially looked to these chiefs who were now pretending to be only senior citizens who could help resolve conflicts in the communities. There were no national or local police visible (Sierra Leone Police – SLP, or Native Administration police – NAP). Sometimes, the chiefs were allowed to stay in-post and they agreed because they wanted to protect their people from the wrath of the RUF. The rebels in turn used these chiefs to mobilise resources and get logistics from the community on their behalf. More usually, however, the chiefs would melt into the bush with their people or flee to the towns.

Communities generally were not *food* secure as there was very little farming during the 11+ years of war. Some communities had rice at the beginning of the war but supplies ran out after the first year and then when available were prohibitively expensive.

The RUF would wait for the farmers to plant and harvest and then attack.

*This action forced many farmers to refuse farming in our community for fear that they might face the same challenge and threat. People also resorted to eating wild fruits and roots like cassava and bush yams, and a wide variety of other usually inedible plants were eaten by villagers to take care of their food needs.*

(Albert Mambu, Elder and Youth Chief and CDF Commander for Tissor village near Kenema City 2011)

This was the case in most communities visited especially in the South-East of the country.

The biggest problem was the lack of salt, which is essential to nutrition. Sometimes the women took big risks to go all out to get salt; a few even prostituted themselves to have access to salt for sale or for retail business. A number of people died because they had no salt. The impact was particularly devastating for

children. Some attacks were because of the presence of salt in the community. When the war came to an end a few people ate salt to the point of falling sick.

The people of Kambia were the exception as they had enough food because they produced more rice than any other district. Some of that food was sold across the Guinea border for certain basic items like salt, Maggi noodles and some medicines.

Before the war,

*There were very few privately owned pharmacies in our communities... So everyone depended on the government hospital or health centre/post for treatment. During the war, health was a problem, as all the health personnel had to flee for fear that they would be drafted into the RUF. Very few people had access to drugs as they were the first targets of the rebels during any attack. Most communities depended on the services of herbalists in their villages. The identities of these herbalists were not disclosed for fear that they too would be taken to the rebel camps.*

*A very few NGOs, especially Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), the International Red Cross (IRC) and GOAL provided food and medicines and treated children, youths and elders. There were no doctors and nurses at the government hospital except those from MSF.*

(P.C. Gbewuru Mansaray of Wara Wara Yagala Chiefdom, Koinadugu District, 2011)

*Before the war the Ministry of Education was in charge of schools and it was working quite OK but when the war started, most of the schools were burnt down and the RUF would conscript students right from school, so we therefore decided not to risk our children and kept them at home.*

*We had some of our children who were educated and these started teaching their brothers free of cost for a while.*

(Amie Kallon, a renowned Sierra Leonean female cultural musician, and Abu Kallon, 2011)

Towards the end of the war, most communities had some form of assistance from the international community via the NGOs. *Shelter* was a major problem as anytime there was an attack, houses were destroyed in the cross fire and these were not rebuilt because no one was sure of what would happen afterwards. The SLG (Sierra Leone Government) and some NGOs provided various types of construction materials to varying communities around the country. Economic livelihood was virtually non-existent as no business activity took place during this period.

## **3.2 The local response**

### **3.2.1 Civic associations and secret societies**

Despite (or perhaps because of) the devastating impact of the war on human security, rural communities remained intact. Food, medicines, education, physical security were all handled as a community and approached in a participatory manner (interactive and community owned). I encountered one entire village that

walked with its chief from the Eastern Province to the North, to escape the war in the former only to find itself unfortunately engulfed by its movement to the latter shortly after it got there.

The pre-war (traditional) leadership structures continued informally to provide whatever degree of governance response was possible.

*The elders and us the youths agreed on protecting ourselves by covering our chiefs. So they stayed with us unrecognised and safe. We lived both in town and in the bush as situations dictated. When it was too unpredictable, they went to the bush, when there was some sanity, they came back and co-habited with them. Our chiefs were really fully in-charge as they had all the powers they had during normal times but did so unnoticed.*

(Youth leader in Nimiyama Chiefdom, Kono District, 2011)

The survival of chiefdom authority was not universal.

*The war destroyed the chieftaincy system and most of the chiefs died. The court system was completely eradicated and replaced by kangaroo courts presided over by [militia] commanders.*

(*Ibid.*)

However, in the chiefdoms I visited, a third of the chiefs remained with their people (even if in hiding) throughout even the most difficult part of the civil war and most of the rest fled only briefly. Although a large number of chiefs died during the war period, their positions were easily refilled after the war.

In addition to the chiefs, the main social structures pressed into service to provide physical security were the *secret societies* and the locally recruited Civil Defence Forces. These helped the chiefs to administer the township as the two had the moral authority and this was prudently used to manage discipline, order and create the awareness that the chiefs were still the kingpin in security and as a result were still responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the township. The CDF, the other secret societies (the Bondo and Poro) and other pre-war associations were key in the re-incorporation and improvement in security in our community.

Sierra Leone was blessed with a rich and diverse associational life before the war broke out: the secret societies (male – the Poro, the Wonde,<sup>4</sup> Gbangbani, Hunting and Ojeh; and female – Bondo); youth, women's and farmers' associations; football, dance, and social clubs; civil society groups; cooperative societies; and financial clubs (using the Grameen model and the OSUSU).<sup>5</sup> Apart from the secret societies, all other social groups in the communities broke down during the war as the environment was no longer safe for such activities. Nonetheless, this rich associational life did provide the basis for resistance and order. In Kambia, for instance, the head of the only civil society group became the head of the CDF later. The secret societies (Poro and the Wonde societies in the South Eastern region

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4 This is the equivalent of the Poro society in the rest of Mende land. It has a fairly different approach to initiation with a very strict social order/contract and unique names/titles.

5 OSUSUs is the local way of calling Rotational Savings and Credit Associations (RoCSAs).

using the password *Hindo-Hindo*) were the most popular of the preceding for mobilisation – even though initiation did not take place regularly during the conflict. In the Western Area, the Hunting Society (the equivalent of the Kamajors, see Section 3.2.2) was the major mobilising force and the *Ojeh* and *Gbethii* were used in the Northern region. In the Koinadugu District the women had a very important role to play and usually carried out their ceremonies at night. The *Gbangbani* was most useful in mobilisation of youths that belonged to the community.

A number of new structures also sprang up during the war and many persisted: The *Hindo-Hindo*;<sup>6</sup> *Mammy Queens* (an RUF innovation of village women's chief);<sup>7</sup> chairmen in refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps; clubs for video and motorbike riding – *OKADAS*;<sup>8</sup> cultural groups; the Sierra Leone Awareness Movement (SLAM); vigilante groups, the CDFs, and Civil Development Units (CDUs). The last three were normally formed in communities as a result of joint request from the Sierra Leone Army and chiefs. They therefore had legitimacy in these communities and commanded some amount of respect. The Tamaboroh mobilised all the secret societies, spiritualists, herbalists, the energies of youths, chiefs, etc in the chiefdoms and townships. The *Donsos* were an integral part of the Tamaboroh but not the only set of people comprising it. Some of the heads of these new structures also acted as chiefs during the war, especially if the incumbent had died or fled. A few of these continued even after the war and were respected because of the way they conducted themselves in very difficult circumstances.

Before the war, the chiefs had been fully in charge of conflict resolution and the running of village activities, including permission to initiate into secret societies. But avoidance of the conflicts that had contributed to the war and the need to involve those who were instrumental to the survival of their communities now dictated a more inclusive approach.

The larger towns and cities developed systems to handle conflicts as a committee comprising youths, women, men and elders was put in place to look into such matters like palavers, women's palavers, protection of the rights of women and children and the like. This committee had powers to recommend to the elders that you be fined, punished or sanctioned. Before the war, everything was handled by a core of chiefs with little or no input from community members. Now, the trend is an interactive approach to problems in our community with all hands on deck.

During the war, the CDF and the chiefs ensured that there was some law and order in their villages. *Ngiema Dama* and *Blama Town* in the East, and towns and villages in the Liberia boundary area, are typical examples. They provided security for all the citizens in their communities. The local courts, as mentioned earlier, worked on at a low key level even during the war. In the North and some parts of the Kono District the RUF proxy chiefs (*G-5*) put in place by the rebels were in

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6 The *Hindo-Hindo* was a password that was used by the Kamajors in the initial stages of the war when they were mobilising. Closely related to the male secret society. *Hindo* generally means 'man'.

7 'Mammy Queens' are female chiefs appointed during the war. They are not elders during normal times.

8 The riding of motorbikes was another creation of the war. The riders are generally referred to as *OKADAS*, a borrowed word from Nigeria.



charge of discipline in their communities. They had their committees which had orders from the commander in the area and their decisions were final.

*After the war, the chiefs came back with the spirit of working together with all stakeholders and incorporated youths and women in the various committees in the chiefdom. This reduced conflicts within our community as all of us saw ourselves as stakeholders.*

(Tombodu youths, Kono District, 2011)

In 86 per cent of the communities I visited for this project at least some chiefs remained (even if in hiding) during the war.

Not all new structures survived or were functional, however. The Movement of Concerned Kono Youths (MOCKY) and National Social Mobilisation Secretariat (NASMOS) – both now defunct – were formed during the war and were vibrant in the Kono District. MOCKY was more or less a tribal civil society movement that had a national structure and presence with a lot of support from the Kono people both in Sierra Leone and the diaspora.

In Kono, after the war, the MOCKY ethnic organisation<sup>9</sup> became stronger as it was gradually turned into an advocacy group for all Konos in the district and this gained the acceptance of the chiefs and elders. They later established sub-branches with offices in all the chiefdoms in the district. They became a force to reckon with and started creating tensions in the communities as they started differentiating between themselves as referring to some as ‘real’ and others as ‘immigrants’. They also started asking ‘foreigners’, i.e. those from other countries and non-Konos, to leave the district as they were trying to rebuild their district.

### **3.2.2 Civil Defence Forces**

Most communities in the South and East created local militias to defend themselves and/or harass the RUF invaders. These forces were weaker in the North and strongest in the South.

The first step came in Kenema Town (in the Eastern Region), where a group related to the male Poro secret society sprang up called the Hindo-Hindo movement. It marked the beginning of a resistance group that was later transformed into a larger Kamajors militia movement, which in turn formed the core of the Civil Defence Force (CDF) in the country.

Kamajors or specialist hunters, typically found one or two to a larger village in the more forested parts of the Liberian border region [south east] before the war and familiar with the local terrain, began to help the army as Scouts from the early days of the war.

(Peters 2011)

Similar groups in other parts of the country were Tamaboroh (Koinadugu), Donsos (Kono), Hunting Society (Western Area) and, in the later part of the war, Kapras

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9 This is a group that was formed by Konos in the diaspora (in Sierra Leone, Europe and the USA). (Konomokwei is Kono for Konos.) The aim was to help rebuild Kono after war, to help Konos who had migrated to other parts of the country, to internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and to neighbouring countries. Last but not least, they were a bridge between their people and aid and donor agencies.

and Gbethiis (North – Temnes). Local self-defence efforts were built around these traditional hunters and extended their training and rituals.

The Civil Defence Force proper was formed as a result of a request from chiefs in the Eastern and Southern regions and all locals were welcome in the society. It is called a society because it has a *secret* to keep, a *password* which helps to identify infiltrators and rogue elements, and a *vow* to upkeep. Membership was voluntary, not mandatory. Community voluntary contributions were solicited and made to support them. 'Due to the ineffectiveness of an army without counter insurgency training in protecting civilians and villagers from raids by forest based rebel guerrillas' (Muana 1997) with time the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) military government encouraged all communities to have vigilantes/CDF to help them identify rebels and strange individuals who could be a source of potential danger to their communities and report their findings to them or their chiefs.

After the democratic elections were won by the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), it too encouraged the CDF and President Kabbah gave them national recognition and made the coordinator of the CDF the Deputy Minister of Defence, Hinga Norman. The government and the foreign military forces supporting it encouraged all chiefdoms to form the CDF and the PCs to be part of the society for the coordination of logistics. These foreign forces (ECOMOG,<sup>10</sup> the Executive Outcomes and Sandline from South Africa, the Ghurkhas, United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)) helped to train the CDF in modern weaponry and provided basic arms and ammunition for them.

After ECOMOG deposed the second military government and the army defected to the rebels, the civilian

President Kabbah controlled [only] two separate military actors, the ECOMOG [largely Nigerian military force] and CDF. The CDF played a key role in interdicting the RUF supply lines in the South. This unit received very little material support from the government, yet the Kamajor units were regarded amongst the most effective (though never completely trusted) force available to the government.

(Albrecht and Jackson 2009)

In the Northern region, the scenario was completely different. First, the war arrived there relatively late. Thus the RUF had been able to study the way the CDF operated and had started infiltrating the rank and file of the society... Some [infiltrators] were commanders of RUF battalions so therefore changed their method of attacking their targets.<sup>11</sup> Second, SLPP government was less confident

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10 ECOMOG (the ECOWAS Monitoring Group) is the armed wing of The Economic Community of West African States – the regional organisation comprising of 16 states (both anglo- and francophone countries) in West Africa with headquarters in Nigeria. Individual countries contribute troops whenever there is a crisis in any of the 16 states. The UN, USA, UK and some other European countries provide the bulk of the operational costs for their deployments and logistics.

11 They would come into a town or village or city, as the case may be, that they wanted to attack and settle in with the indigenes for a while, know their customs and traditions, their hiding places (Sokoihun), the various routes to enter and escape from the town, and know all the houses where they had CDF members (the active commanders), note the types and quantities of weapons they had in that particular village or location, and the direction from which possible reinforcement could come to help repel any attack, etc.

of the loyalty of the North, so that the CDF there was even less well armed than elsewhere, leaving them with only local weapons (cutlasses, machetes, slings etc.). So the RUF had a fairly easy ride in most of the villages and towns it attacked.

There were two types of CDF groups in the Northern region:

1. the Gbethiis (mainly in the Bombali – Makeni/Lunsar axis, Kambia and Port Loko and Tonkolili Districts), and
2. the Tamaborohs (mainly in the Koinadugu area – Kabala, Yagala, Fadugu, Musaia, Bafodia and the rest of the villages in the Koinadugu District).

These two groups had very different command structures in that the Gbethiis were generally Temne-speaking CDF fighters, whilst the Tamaborohs were Koranko, Limba and Yalunka tribesmen and used the spiritual powers of alpha<sup>12</sup> men/women. Gbethiis would withdraw and sometimes not come back into their communities for fear that they might be identified but instead would join the SLA or foreign forces as guides to counter-attack, or sometimes come back and join forces with the rebels. The Tamaborohs on the other hand were better fighters and did not easily lose as they were more organised with a very solid command structure, and also had an unwritten contract between the various units in the society.

### **3.2.3 Social control and CDF abuses**

In the early stages of the war the chiefs controlled those who were recruited into the CDF and therefore were able to assure that the local CDF behaved responsibly toward them and the communities they were designed to protect. The Kamajor militia was always part and parcel of the town community. They networked very well with the communities as they provided them with backup in logistics, physically took sticks to fight the rebels when the going got tough, and gave them pertinent intelligence on the movement of the rebels and helped them identify some RUF rebels when they came to town as spies.

Systems were put in place to ensure that especially those in arms did not take undue advantage over civilians. Before the war, the chiefs alone handled internal security in villages but they had to bring in the CDF during the war to ensure that the spirit of inclusion was maintained in communities. The condition of such control, however, was that the chief had to be a member of the CDF.

As the war progressed initiators in the hunters' and secret societies became indiscriminate in their recruitment (as the initiates paid them fees) and chiefs who were not deeply involved in the actions of the CDF themselves lost authority over them, with the consequence that these CDF carried out abuses, especially when they were recruited to fight in areas away from their homes.

They were fine in the beginning but later misbehaved somewhere in the middle of the war and they became more treacherous than the RUF and the SLA. They did,

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12 These are men and women who have vast knowledge of the Qur'an and herbs and were believed to be able to make the fighters invisible to their enemies and impervious to shotguns and other light weapons. They were also thought to be able to help redirect bullets back to their enemies.

however, protect the communities, especially areas where the foreign forces could not cover or protect.

The CDF were considered to be saviours, but unfortunately, some started to behave like the rebels by removing our possessions from us (food, etc.). Some were really bad as they became very violent. Also when they came in, all the houses that were occupied by the RUF were badly vandalised and the owners badly beaten or sometimes killed. The CDF also practised cannibalism for a while in public (e.g. cooking body parts of your own brother, sister etc. and asking you to provide the bread to eat). They also raped a number of women and disembowelled Prisoners of War (POWs) and suspects. They took away the possessions of people during attacks (looting of property), and occupied houses they felt had been used by or belonged to RUF or SLA or sympathisers of the two.

Chiefs retained at least some degree of direction over 71 per cent of the CDF forces in the areas I visited, with the consequence that only a third of these CDFs gave trouble to their communities. Clearly this still leaves a number who did engage in atrocities, especially with other communities.

## 4 Governance in the aftermath

### 4.1 Leadership for the CDF?

Usually, in the aftermath of a war, those who are prominent in defending their communities are able to claim leadership roles within it. But this has rarely happened in Sierra Leone because of the abuses that occurred.

*Authority was not shifted to the bad ones instead [in selecting new chiefs and local councillors] they considered those from ruling houses and with good character. Whatever contribution they could have made during the war was not a trump card for chieftaincy. The bad guys were in fact stigmatised, ostracised and some have also been sanctioned not to be considered for leadership positions in the community. Sometimes they have also been asked to leave indirectly as they could not feel convenient with the treatment they received from the community members including their own family. Some have faced mob justice and were also harassed by us for their role in the war.*

(Giema Dama, Kenema District in the Eastern region)

Elsewhere the chiefs and their subjects said 'We do not recognise all those who in one way or the other made us to suffer in the hands of the RUF or in their own hands'. They were rejected by communities and not given the opportunity to seek for any office in the chieftdom or township.

### 4.2 Restoration of the chiefs

Even though grievances against some of the chiefs had led some young people to join the RUF, the institutions of chieftaincy were still quite popular and were easily and universally re-established after the war. In only 19 per cent of our study

communities was there any challenge to the return of the traditional chiefs at the end of the war.

Despite the uniformity of the outcome, restoration varied according to the conditions of the local conflict. In many places the RUF had created their own version of a Native Administration system. Kono District was a special case as they were specifically targeted by the best-trained rebels, for they were going in for the diamonds and gold in the district. The rebels therefore overran the district and had a government with proxy chiefs (Mammy Queens and male G-5s).

*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 all those who worked as chiefs in their stead and ensured that they worked together for a while before formally re-taking power and the RUF proxy chiefs gave up voluntarily to the chiefs.*

(Communities in Bo, Moyamba, Bonthe, Pujehun, in the South and Kenema, Kailahun and Kono in the Eastern region)

In the North however, very few communities had a peaceful transition, most of the chiefs had to be removed by either force of arms (UNAMSIL, SLA and the CDF) or the people refusing to recognise their authority.

The chiefs were not part of the community administrative structure during the war in the North. For a while the communities tried to utilise their traditional structures even when the chiefs were physically absent. Once the chiefs came back, power was relinquished to them. In some instances, the chiefdom was completely cut off from Freetown/central government for a long period. 'During this period we ensured that traditions and culture were maintained by respecting our elders and we sustained the unity we had amongst ourselves'<sup>13</sup> (youths in Dambala, Jaiama Nimikoro, Rutile, and Kabala 2010 and 2011). The chiefs came back and took their positions. In general, the proxy chiefs left immediately the chiefs came in and the chiefs took over. But in some places the deposed RUF G-5 and Mammy Queens stayed in their communities unhindered.<sup>14</sup>

The rebels in areas where the CDF were active did not occupy the seats of the PCs as they knew the CDF would remove them at any time (it was all hit-and-run). So it was a smooth transition to the larger political order. This was the case in all the chiefdom headquarter towns in the following districts: – Moyamba, Pujehun, Bonthe (Rutile), Kailahun, and Koinadugu.

In some of these places, the CDF had assumed *de facto* control in the absence of the chiefs. They did not find it comfortable to hand power back but they managed it delicately. In a village like Tissor in the East, they encouraged themselves and their children to pay the local tax and pay licences that were meant to build up the revenue base of the then committee of management of the Kenema District

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13 This was practically experienced in South especially in Dambala – Selenga Chiefdom, Bo District and Rutile in the Bonthe District and in some parts of the Northern region – Koinadugu District, and Kono District in the Eastern province.)

14 These include Rokupr – Magbema chiefdom, Kambia Town – Magbema chiefdom, Bumban in the Biriwa chiefdom, and Bombali District.

Council, as they were in the process of being revamped. They saw this as a way of reincorporating themselves into the mainstream governance political system.

In some other communities the chiefs worked collaboratively with the RUF/CDF for some time (i.e. the PCs used the CDF to enforce laws when some indigenes wanted to flout the laws of the land). The CDF later took over the reins of power and this happened very smoothly because they were cognisant of the fact that they were just in an acting position. Selenga/Dambala Chiefdom is a typical example. The central government immediately after the war ended started reintroducing the local government system by sensitising the people in the communities about re-establishing the councils, and later conducted council elections and trained personnel to man the various offices. The government brought in some civil servants (on secondment to act as Chief Administrators) and installed the chiefs as members of the newly constituted councils.

Blama was a very hot spot during the war because of its strategic location [on the main highway between Bo and Kenema (two provincial cities) and a few kilometres from Baojibu and Tongo fields (two diamond fields and therefore a route that leads to Kono – the home of Sierra Leone’s diamonds)]. The chiefs therefore did not have the opportunity to rule in peace during the war. They did not run away into the bush permanently but went in and out as and when there was peace. This notwithstanding, they did not have difficulty linking up with the central government as they managed to maintain their links with the district administration and central government. There was no contest to the powers of the chiefs once the war was declared over.

Most communities did not need to be reincorporated as they did not have a stable or otherwise organised rebel governance system. They did, however, have to contend with a few people who refused to hand over houses they had occupied because they had been abandoned by the owners for fear of their lives. This led to a mass manhunt for non-Konos in an operation meant to get rid of non-Konos in the township. This operation resulted in the deaths of several non-Konos in the district and a number of identification mistakes were made.

In some other areas, like Ngiema Dama in the Eastern region, they had no alternative but to listen to the loyal soldiers (who also had orders from Freetown and the central governments there at the time). The loyal soldiers were really in charge at that time. Reincorporation was really not an issue for them because they knew they had to do so to be part of the larger political order. They went all out as much as possible to maintain the chieftaincy system during the war. Their chiefs were constantly in the *Sokoihun* hiding away from the rebels or any marauding gang of armed combatants. They would only come out when they got wind about food supplies from government and NGOs. When the war was declared over all they did was to reassemble and go straight into administrative action.

In cosmopolitan cities like Bo and Kenema, they had no problem with restoration as the civilian administrations were in charge, even during the peak of the war. Bo City was in fact home for all the 52 chiefs in the Southern Province. All the chiefs had to do was to return to their homes/communities and take over from the CDF who had been acting as community leaders whilst their chiefs were away in Bo. In both cities (Bo and Kenema), the SLG had the provincial administrators in place

throughout the war and they were quite functional in organising the CDF and other developmental programmes in the region. In the East it was slightly different, as some of the chiefs (especially the section and town chiefs) stayed with their people and fought the rebels, as most of these were well-trained hunters and so knew their terrain better than anyone who would just go to plunder and attack (pillage).

Once again, it is surprising that the institution of chieftaincy was so easily restored when its performance had been one of the grievances that led young men to join the RUF. One of the factors in the restoration, obviously, was the abuses conducted by the young in the RUF and many of the CDFs, delegitimising those who might have opposed it.

Another factor was the fact that many chiefs died during the prolonged disruption of the war, so that some of those who were considered abusive were no longer alive. Sensitisation by NGOs and government played a big role in giving the communities hope about replacements of their dead chiefs. Government also facilitated the process of electing the PCs by involving the Independent National Elections Commission (INEC) in conducting all PC elections in the country. In Bo Districts for instance, there were 15 chiefdoms with 15 PCs and only two survived the war, both very old.<sup>15</sup>

The Head of State's diligence and goodwill was very useful in the process. He asked people to go back to traditional practices of initiation (Bondo, Poro etc) so they felt like they were before the war... The chiefs also started taking care of our differences and the young people too followed suit. The youths helped their chiefs in all of their endeavours, like development in the townships and had a very congenial relationship with the youths.

The secret societies started initiations once more and this encouraged the young men and women to come back as they were key in their lives (they had missed the initiation and dancing for about nine years in their case). The men's secret society especially was useful in organising the young men into groups to help protect the town from the few roaming militia boys that were marauding villages.

Finally, during the war chiefs made a major change to include youth and women in their governance practices. (The one RUF innovation that has survived the war has been their creation of the role of Mammy Queen in all communities. This survival doubtless also has been aided by the considerable emphasis on women's rights by most of the international assistance and peacekeeping actors.)

*Most community members came with different ideas but when they returned, they reoriented themselves and cooperated with our chiefs. The chiefs changed their method of administering chiefdoms and towns by bringing people in – though not completely.*

(New Sembahun Town, Tankoro Section, Tankoro Chiefdom, Kono District, 2011)

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15 Chief Hindowa of Baaja chiefdom and Chief Gbenga (who is now blind).

### 4.3 The implications of local government reforms

Despite the restoration of chieftaincy and its general popularity, there are four other signs that the SLPP government was concerned about its lack of broad responsiveness before the war, for many of the features of Native Administration that made it so strong have been weakened. First, elected district councils have been brought back from the early independence period. Although the Paramount Chiefs are represented on the councils, the elected Ward Councillors and District Chairmen give chiefs competition for leadership. Second, chiefs also have to share their revenues with the councils, which both find a major problem and source of tension. In fact in 94 per cent of the areas I visited there was significant conflict between the chiefs and their district councils. Third, initially the prefectorial District Officers (DOs), who had been the link between the PCs and the central government were made only officers of their councils, which also weakened the influence of the chiefs.

It would appear, however, that the move to democratic decentralisation has stalled, quite possibly for partisan reasons, and that the influence of the chiefs is again on the rise. The district councils were abolished in the early independence period by an All People's Congress government and the APC recaptured the presidency in 2007. Currently eight out of the 19 councils consider themselves as SLPP councils,<sup>16</sup> whilst the 11 remaining councils are branded APC. Even so, this majority of councils does not give the APC the degree of central control that de-concentration through the DOs and PCs would have provided. Perhaps for this reason, or perhaps for financial ones, further devolution to the councils is now stalled. There are about 84 Statutory Functions and Instruments available for decentralisation and to date only 48 (57 per cent) have been devolved to the councils.

Contributing to the stalled devolution is the tension generally found between the Paramount Chiefs and the district councils, of which they are members. This is how the District Officers have become again prefectorial agents of the centre again. As the PCs all over the country were constantly reporting the problems they were liaising with the Local Councils and insisting they wanted the return of the DOs in the districts, as they were not getting the sort of attention they used to get from the district administration (with DOs) before the war.

Fourth, the Native Administration courts also are in disarray. During the war they too were targeted by the RUF. Some court chairmen were spared but all those who judged cases unfairly were either killed or exiled from their own communities by the youths and elders. In the present day circumstance, most communities are now using the alternative dispute mechanisms created by donors to resolve conflicts as they are still afraid of the very high fines that the court chairmen used to levy for common disputes between and within families and households in their communities. In addition the magistrates' courts are more accessible and extended. The magistrates may not be incorruptible, but the NA judges/chairmen are believed to have been worse, as all of their income is derived from the fees and fines they impose and as their practices are much less restricted by the law

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16 Bo City, Bo District, Pujehun District, Bonthe District, Moyamba District, Kenema City, Kenema District and Kailahun District.



and formal procedures, which Leoneans now seem to value more than they did in the colonial period.<sup>17</sup>

The consequences of the four changes and the preceding tensions are that the post-war chiefs seem to be more moral leaders than authoritative decision-makers and are much more responsive to their communities. But this has left both the Native Administration and the district councils functioning poorly. Chiefs are not a wholly undemocratic institution in Sierra Leone. All local taxpayers participated in their election, and women as well as men are chosen for these offices. Nonetheless, they must be selected from among the descendants of the locality's founding families and they hold office for life. In exiting the war Sierra Leone has seemed to respond to conflicting imperatives – to build on the institutions that have traditional legitimacy, and to provide for more democratic and reliably responsive local governance. This tension does not yet seem to have been finally resolved.

## 5 Security sector reform

### 5.1 The Sierra Leone Army

Before the war, communities had respect and a fairly good relationship with most of the Sierra Leone Army. The SLA was trusted when the war started as people saw them as saviours trying to repel the rebels when they made their first advances to towns and cities. This later changed when the Civil Defence Forces started working with the SLA and discovered that some of the attacks on towns and villages were organised by collaborating soldiers (later called 'sobels'). This dented the very cordial relationship that existed between the civilians and the SL army and this was the situation throughout the war. The communities had had an implicit agreement with the SLA officers that they would put their trust in them to protect them and that the communities in turn would provide intelligence and some logistical support for the army. This broke down immediately when the CDF discovered that some SLAs were disguising themselves as RUF (sobels) to attack the very people they were meant to protect.

Matters became even worse when most of the SLA broke with the civilian government and joined the RUF in open rebellion. The consequence was that after the British intervention the forces who rebelled were drummed out of the corps and a wholly new force was recruited. The army was retrained initially by the British Military Assistance Training Team (BMATT) and later by the International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT). All training facilities were facilitated and led by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Security Sector Reform has since been treated as a governance issue and also multilevelled to ensure the participation of all community members irrespective of where they are.

The SSR played a very important role in improving on the internal and external security within the communities in particular, and Sierra Leone in general. The

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17 A similar shift in popular sentiment from NA courts toward the magistrates' ones is evident in Ghana (Crook *et al.* 2010).

project changed the face of security from being looked at as a number of separate entities managed only by uniformed men and women, pulling themselves apart for recognition to one where all players saw themselves as a team, each one playing a wing and contributing to the success of the team scoring any goal.

Before the reintroduction of democracy, which included the early war years of J.S. Momoh (1991–92 before the coup), and the NPRC's V. Strasser (1992–96) and NPRC's J. Maada Bio (1996); the security architecture was operating with the President or Head of State (at the helm) but he got separate audiences with the heads of the SL Police and SLA. Intelligence was very poorly coordinated. This led to a number of unfortunate circumstances in which statehouse took wrong decisions based on unprofessionally coordinated intelligence from the two separate forces.

SSR introduced the Office of National Security (ONS) with a Coordinator that ensured that security was brought to the doorsteps of the people in their various communities. A Central Intelligence and Security Unit was created to gather information and process it before forwarding it to the ONS via its Coordinator who then takes it to the National Security Council (NCS), which meets at least once in a month.

Provincial Security Committees (PROSECs) and District Security Committees (DISECs) were set up and coordinators appointed to man the offices in the provinces. The DISECs met weekly, and passed on information to the PROSECs who met bi-weekly and the PROSECs then sent these pieces of information to the National Security Coordinator for the information of the National Security Council (NSC). The PCs were key members of these committees as they brought in information from their people at the lowest level of governance.

Approximately 40% of the population in each district were aware of the existence of the DISECs and PROSECs and their role in collecting security information. This is [an] impressive statistic given the complete failure of the intelligence structure before and during the war. There is no doubt that not only have significant improvements taken place within the Security System transformation process, but also that they have been noticed and appreciated by local population across a range of districts. Whilst problems still remain, the... greater visibility of the ONS at local level contributed to the general population feeling more secure.

(Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 194, 197)

*The retraining exercise by the British [Department for International Development supported SSR/IMATT] helped to change our opinion about them and thus reaccept them into our communities at the end of the war.*  
(Chiefs in Tombodu, Kamara Chiefdom, Kono District, 2011)

The reputation of the SLA has been nearly completely restored. They even have started taking part in peace missions throughout the world, especially in Sudan.

## 5.2 The Sierra Leone Police

The national police also were subject to a major Security Sector Reform initiative, again with British leadership. In this case, the reform involved a restructuring of an existing cadre, not its replacement. Before the war the SLP were hardly present in the rural areas at all, leaving most real rural policing to the NA police.

*Before the war, we then had both the SLP and Native Administration Police (aka NA Gbadda) in our midst. The NA Police were more active and present as the PCs were very active and determined to defend their chiefdoms because they had the authority with very little political interference. All conflicts were resolved in the NA and very few serious cases went to the SLP as their presence was not really felt and the people had more trust in their chiefs than the police. We only took conflicts like arson, wounding with aggravation and very serious crimes like murder to the SLP, as they would intimidate the complainant and the victim.*

(Mixed group interview with chiefs and youths in Hangha- Kenema District, 2011)

*The SLP was the state actor that we had the least relationship with, as they used to intimidate community members in pre-war SL. During the war, the SLP were targeted in communities as they fell out with people and as a result were targeted by the youths and the rebels alike. They were hardly seen as they lost their credibility before the war and this was the situation till the end of the war.*

(Youths during a Focus Group Discussion in Bo City, Bo District, 2010)

The SLP were a problem to themselves and the community. They were considered collaborators in that they allowed the RUF and its accomplices to come in easily with arms and ammunition because they took bribes at check points. This further made them very unpopular and as a result they lost credibility and the confidence of the civilians they were supposed to work with. The SLP was marginalised and sometimes silenced because of the injustice meted against civilians in the pre-war state.

The prolongation of the conflict affected and demoralised all the loyal forces (SLP, SLA, the SL Prisons and SL Fire Forces) as they were the first to be targeted, humiliated and killed in the town square whenever the rebels took over a town. The war ended the rule of law, human rights, and the authority of all the three tiers of governance (central, local and native). As a result of this, all the local structures had been destroyed, sacred society bushes and shrines sometimes were completely desecrated, and barracks vandalised or completely destroyed. Some of the government forces forcibly recruited, school-age boys were conscripted, and women raped. This left a big gap between the forces and the people they were supposed to protect as it destroyed confidence, trust and hope in the capacity of these forces to protect them from external aggressors.

Their reputation however has been reinstated with the UK–DFID-led Security Sector Reform Project (SSRP) as they have now been retrained and new officers recruited and some amount of change is now visible, even though the element of corruption is still rife in some junior ranks. Thus the people have now accepted the SLP and are working very amicably with them in their communities. At the end of the war, both the SLA and the SLP by association learnt how to relate well with

civilians and at the same time maintain security in communities. It made them realise that they could still make their fortune in the military and police if they could reform their ways. They also saw the way the foreign and international forces treated the community to get information that enabled them to succeed, and therefore easily accepted local needs community policing when it was introduced to them eventually.

As a part of SSR, 'Local Needs Policing' (LNP) was also introduced in all the divisions. As early as 1998 in the

very early stage of the police reform process, the future policing doctrine of the Sierra Leone was first defined as Local Needs Policing, which has guided police reform to this day. In its basic form, Local Needs Policing was defined as: 'Policing that meets the expectations and needs of the local community and reflects national standards and objectives.  
(Albrecht and Jackson 2009)

Another aspect of SSR of the SLP was the Family Support Unit (FSU), which started as a Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) in 1999 after the invasion of Freetown, to handle problems between the ex-combatants and their combat wives,<sup>18</sup> was soon replicated in all the 26 divisions of the SLP throughout the country. This also helped in providing an avenue for women and children to report matters of violence and neglect to the SLP. They were manned by experienced investigators seconded from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the SLP.

The consequences of SSR are that the SLP are much improved coming out of the war. But unlike the SLA it would be a mistake to say that they have been wholly transformed.

*Presently we are cautiously working with the SLP as they have been retrained and given some logistics. There are quite a number that have terrible tricks up till now. They are still chasing money and given unfair judgement in the police stations.*

(Youths in Rokupr Magbema chiefdom and Kawula–Masungbala chiefdom, Kambia District, 2011)

The problem is not just one of police practice but also presence. The SL government tried to reconstruct these barracks and build a few new ones in strategic locations which were identified as volatile/grey areas in some district headquarter towns. They have also in some cases built new ones by raising monies in the form of loans and sometimes grants from the international community (mainly via DFID as lead donor). But some villages up to now still do not have proper police stations or posts as there is no cell to detain suspects etc. This has slowed down the government's effort to redeploy the various forces and is still continuing to slow the pace at which justice can be accessed by all in the country.

The SLP was still absent or barely present in many of the areas I visited. It was most present in the East and very weak in its presence in over half of the North. Even where the SLP is present in the rural areas its numbers are weak. Given

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18 Women were initially taken as sex-slaves after attacks on communities but later considered by senior combatants as wives, therefore referred to as combat wives.

these realities one would think that it is really important for the SLP to be supported in their local work by the NA police. But there is no national provision for their pay and the chief's source of revenue is now being shared with the district councils. In 13 per cent of the communities I studied the SLP were absent and in another 16 per cent they were barely present. Thus in only 29 per cent of the areas I visited are the NA police functioning in a way that is meaningful.

The word tribal as a prefix to describe the NA police sounds a little odd but it does perform a basic task and that is, during the days of the colonial master, most of the PCs had to employ and train trustworthy men to provide security for the community. They were led by a Sergeant Major who was a powerful officer/man in the chiefdom. He had powers to order the arrest of anyone who they thought was not working in the interest of the chiefdom. These NA police officers collected taxes, fees and licences, and carried arrests and summons and fines on behalf of the court chairman. This continued until the start of the war in 1991 when their powers started dissipating as the ruling government started maltreating all those PCs they felt were not supporting their government/party. A number of them were dethroned, some imprisoned and a few killed. Some were kept in post but they really had no power in their own chiefdom as the government in those days would bring in a stranger and crown him/her as PC over them. Tribal or NA police were quite key in maintaining law and order whenever some semblance of sanity returned to our communities. They were always loved by us because we always felt they had long been marginalised. To date most of them have not been paid for between 40–58 months and they are not provided with uniforms either. This had broken the dynamics in the chiefdom administration and rendered the PCs less effective, as they do not have the mechanisms to ensure that things happen in the chiefdom. The social contract between the chiefdom administration and their subjects is somehow broken and this is affecting the security sector support system in the chiefdoms. The network of relationships within the security sector is somehow broken too, as there is a disconnect between some of the state actors.

The point here is then that SSR of the policing function in Sierra Leone has been incompletely conceived and executed. Not only have insufficient numbers of incompetent and corrupt police been replaced in the SLP to create the kind of thorough reform that was accomplished with the SLA, but the NA police rural base for policing was ignored, is starved for support and now rarely functions properly. SSR cannot be accomplished from the capital alone; community institutions have to be supported or changed as well.

## 6 Multilayered and networked governance

A society engaged in conflict and then emerging from it will be subject to networks of relationships by a variety of international actors with its multiple levels of government that are even more critical, fluid and complex than those in the normal state. The question is not whether significant international influences exist in these circumstances but what their implications are for the long-term governance of the society.

### 6.1 The security sector

The first and most obvious place to begin is with those actors directly involved in military operations. The RUF insurgency was exported from the Liberian civil war and was entwined with its progress. Both the RUF and the Liberian rebellions were ultimately defeated and at least in Sierra Leone their brutality meant that almost none of the insurgent institutional innovations survived it.

The impact of the *international forces* that assembled over time to defeat the rebellion has been much more lasting, however. At first these were mainly regional forces from Guinea and Nigeria which came on a bilateral military pact between SL and two sister countries. They came in and assisted an ill-equipped SLA in the early 1990s when the war had just started. When ECOWAS decided to send in an intervention force, these two armies were transformed into ECOMOG, with additional troops from Mali, Senegal and Ghana, and under Nigerian command. Later the NPRC contracted the South African mercenaries Executive Outcomes (Sandline) to help protect the diamond fields in Kono District and Tongo in the Kenema District. These contributed immensely in training the CDFs and with government's approval and support also somehow equipped them. The ECOMOG forces too worked hand-in-hand with the civilians on a bargain – the CDF and townspeople would provide intelligence and guide ECOMOG through the bush and it would provide physical security from the RUF for their communities.

The transformation in the Nigerian Army contingent after its absorption into the UN force (UNAMSIL) taught the SLA multiple lessons, including the following:

- a. that the military could be respected if it protected and respected the civilians it was supposed to defend
- b. that the military must be a disciplined institution which must be law-abiding and stable and
- c. that they are democratically subordinate to the civilians in power.

The communities said they saw a marked difference in the behaviour of the Nigerian soldiers when they changed their berets (from green/red to the UN blue beret). They became more cautious with POWs and even ‘the ordinary civilians’<sup>19</sup> in the towns and villages. They no longer ill-treated people the way they used to as the command structure and mandate had changed and they were now operating under the Geneva Convention. After this period, the Nigerian contingent also encouraged dialogue between and within communities, and the training their officers offered to the SLA was the beginning of professionalism in the state actors (SLA and SLP especially) and their realisation that they must respect the principles of democratic governance by civilians.

The mixture of soldiers from all over the globe was very good as the people saw the way different military men behave in warfare, not only African forces but also Asian ones from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India as well as the Ghurkhas. The British forces also came with permission of UNAMSIL but operated with a long-standing bilateral arrangement and mandate with SL.

The peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone had an impact on the security sector reform process as they were an inspiration to the SLA and SLP, seeing their contemporaries from neighbouring states and other African countries coming in to train them and monitor their performance and behaviour. It sent a message that armed conflict cannot be used to shoot one’s way to power (statehouse). It also made our soldiers realise that being a military man does not mean you are above the civilians but you are really meant to protect them from external threats. The police too saw the role of the civilian police in the UN international force. Above all it gave the SLA and SLP some hope that if they behave and measure up to international standards, they too might be drafted into the various peacekeeping missions in the world.

The international community, especially UK DFID, also did the *retraining* of the SLA, Prisons Service, Fire Force and SLP, and provided logistics including uniforms and booths for them. This added value to them and the UK presence encouraged the population to accept them without much question, as the international community were their moral guarantors.

## 6.2 Governance

*Democratisation* remained a consistent theme of international community pressure on Sierra Leone throughout the civil war and after. Sometimes the consequences were not as intended.

The international community, considered the major problem in Sierra Leone at the time to be the military regime (NPRC), and put it under pressure to organise elections as soon as possible. Seeing a chance to field a successful presidential candidate, one faction within the NPRC took over the government

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19 Combatants (RUF) and the state security actors (SLA and SLP) used to call civilians ‘ordinary civilians’, which meant those were of no use as the RUF, SLA and SLP were the ones doing the fighting, dying, and sacrificing, as they saw it. Sometimes they even referred to them as ‘bloody civilians’. This was one of the things that spurred the communities to form the civil defence militia to protect themselves and therefore regain their human rights from the combatants.

in a palace coup and announced an election timetable, whilst pressing ahead with the Abidjan negotiations. The RUF suspected elections were a ruse to marginalize its own concerns about to be tabled in Abidjan.

(Richards and Vincent 2008: 83)

More positive were the international pressures for a free and fair presidential election in 2007. Outgoing President Kabbah was under great pressure from his SLPP to overrule the victory of Ernest Koroma of the APC. A united and networked international community (including even China and Iran) persuaded Kabbah to abide by the Electoral Commission's vote count (Leonard *et al.* 2009).

The donors also ensured that the *decentralisation* process indeed took off and guided the process for a while by having consultants hired to conduct training of council officials and monitor the process. In this way multilevelled network governance was reintroduced in the country after 24 years in limbo (under a virtual one-party state).

Dramatic international influence on *women's rights* also was evident by the conclusion of the war. I have already noted the infusion of gender-sensitive policing into the SLP. The need to consult with women and to be more attentive to their rights also was quite evident in my interviews with multiple chiefs throughout the country. Indeed the only RUF institutional innovation that survived the war was the creation of the community office of Mammy Queen for women's issues.

### 6.3 Local development

During periods of conflict local institutions of governance will be more important and there will be more international donors and peacekeepers, who will intervene more widely with greater consequence. Throughout the war the international community's *humanitarian relief* dealt with the multiple other aspects of wellbeing that contribute to human security, broadly considered. A very large number of bilateral and multilateral donors together with a range of United Nations Agencies played a key role. They also networked with communities to support small initiatives through INGOs and some reputable national NGOs. Human, child and women's rights programmes for instance were run through Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The degree of networking with external actors varied from one community to the other. Some village communities especially in the East (Kenema, Kailahun) and South (Bonthe – Moriba Town and Rutile) had no networks with external actors but used their local networks in the nearby villages to cope during the difficult periods of the war. Messages were passed and received by utilising bypass roads. Some people had the luck of relating well with the various militias and armies (fighting forces) that took over their villages and towns for a while.

A few communities had refugee and IDP camps near them and these camps were of tremendous help to them as the NGOs that serviced them in turn provided them with some assistance/projects as a host community. In parts of the Southern region, for instance, the people from the surrounding small villages abandoned them and came to the largest town/chiefdom HQ towns, e.g. Koribondo in the Jaiama Bongor Chiefdom on the main Bo–Liberia highway. In this case, the only



external actors they networked with were NGOs (Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Africare and the SL Red Cross) in the Bo axis.

In Bo (Southern SL) networks and linkages were established and maintained with NGOs, as they were and are still, their main source of development aid. Merlin, Care, World Vision, CONCERN Worldwide, ActionAid, Africare, GTZ and a host of INGOs were and remain quite visible in the Bo environ. The city council is also networking with donors and financial institutions globally (DFID, World Bank, Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and African Development Bank (ADB)). The INGOs were quite handy during the peak of the war as they were the main network of organisations that the people looked forward to for their survival.

In Kono (Eastern SL), descendants of the Kamara chiefdom in the diaspora organised and sent used clothing, money, food and medicines. Individuals and groups volunteered and liaised with the government of SL to get logistics for the forces. A new group called MOCKY (Movement of Concerned Kono Youths) sprang up and played a big role in setting up networks and linkages with the outside world, NGOs, foreign governments and donors at large. The Paramount Chiefs in exile in Europe and the USA also got information from their villages and chiefdoms and used it to solicit help from donors and well-wishers.

Others like Jaiama Sewafe had very few networks with other people or external actors as their villages are not close by – they are all poles apart – so tried to work within their communities, practiced the barter system and helped each other when in need. The youths were in charge of facilitating such activities in their communities since they could not access help from NGOs and government.

In the Northern Region, the scenario was different as they networked with relatives within and around neighbouring villages and chiefdoms, and through linkages in Guinea and Freetown. They also reintroduced and utilised the barter system to break the barrier of currency exchange and to facilitate networking, as there was an acute shortage of physical cash in the region. This was the case in the Koinadugu (Kabala, Yagala, and Bafodia), Bombali and Kambia Districts, especially in those chiefdoms that are near the Guinea international border. Coordination was effective within and around nearby societies. Some chiefdoms like Wara Wara Bafodia in Koinadugu District are still not benefitting from interventions by the District Council or intervention from NGOs (as has been the case since independence).

As the war wound down, NGOs also played a key role, as they provided seeds and tools for farmers in the villages. This forced, or rather encouraged, people to return to their various villages and start farming. Africare provided seeds and tools – even though some came in very late and some of the stock was eaten by the beneficiaries; Medicines Sans Frontières (MSF) did vaccinations and inoculations for children under-fives (U–5) and took care of pregnant women and lactating mothers. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided non-food items (NFI). These NGOs played a key role in the reincorporation process. Others that played an active role in the reincorporation process included NGOs like Care, Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone (EFSL), Red Cross, Caritas, MSF and ActionAid. They also helped returnees to build houses by providing corrugated iron sheets/zinc for them.

The few donor-supported FM radio stations (98.1 and Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS) FM 100) and NGOs played a big role in reincorporating communities into the larger political picture. The NGOs for instance made an announcement saying that they would only supply food to people in their home communities and not in Bo Town or any camp situation. The SLG also announced that all the PCs should go back to their different chiefdoms if they wanted to receive help from them. The civilians were also encouraged to go back and resettle in their home villages and start doing the usual farming exercises. They also said all PCs who were in position pre-war were still recognised as the PCs post-war. Rural communities like Koribondo in the Jaiama Bongor Chiefdom, Bo District, benefited from the services of these FM radio stations and felt part of the wider political arrangement as their voices could be heard on these stations in radio discussions, requests, community announcements and initiation ceremony announcements etc.

The government (SLPP in this case) put mechanisms (DDR and NaCSA)<sup>20</sup> in place to handle issues like schools, health centres, Court Barry reconstruction,<sup>21</sup> etc. For food production, they had support from INGOs like Care, World Vision (WV), MSF, Medical Emergency Relief International (MERLIN), etc... INGOs and international donors played a key role in helping us re-establish our human security. They provided nearly all the basic necessities like food, water, clothing, NFIs, and some advocacy on behalf of the communities.

With regard to *health* services, the NGOs were the major source of drugs and treatment. Corn soya beans (CSB), a nutritional supplement, was introduced during this period. Some communities had health centres, but with no community health workers. Some had displaced dispensers and some nurses who filled in until the time they were properly posted. The NGOs used to come as the people hadn't the opportunity to go to hospitals or health centres. All was free of cost. Post-war the SLG started re-equipping, refurbishing and reconstructing health centres, clinics, Peripheral Health Units (PHUs), in various communities with the help of donors and multi- and bilateral development partners.

There were very few national NGOs in the country when the war started. They only started coming up sometime in the mid-1990s when the INGOs needed to intervene in some very remote communities where they were not allowed to go for security reasons. They started as Community Based Organisation (CBOs) and were later, with the help of the INGOs, transformed into NGOs. They took care of vulnerable women, ex-combatants and children. Some are still in communities in which they were formed, carrying out small projects on behalf of the communities from different donors, government and INGOs. Very few of these NGO/CBOs grew and their capacities were not built by the INGOs. Therefore some have closed down because they cannot access enough funds to support their operations and continue implementing projects and programmes in their communities and nearby ones.

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20 The National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) handled rehabilitation, reconstruction, resettlement and reintegration. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) was set up to handle ex-combatants.

21 Court Barry is a court house in all chiefdoms where the chiefdom court chairman sits his court session and the Paramount Chief also holds chiefdom meetings.

The extent to which the war created large numbers of unmediated relationships between international actors and villagers has been seen by some analysts as a barrier to state reconstruction: 'Overall, the international community has played a positive role. The big problem is that its very success detracts from the legitimacy of the government' (Kaldor 2006). For a variety of reasons this fear probably is exaggerated. A careful study of this issue in Kenya, where there is a huge density of INGOs and NGOs, found that the state is usually credited for their activities and that government actors most often are involved with what they do (Brass 2010). Similar dynamics can be observed in Sierra Leone.

First, the relationships between international actors and village governance structures in most cases were institutional ones, not too strong and therefore not frequent, as they had expatriate staff from these INGOs coming to the communities and identifying their community needs (jointly with them) before the needs were serviced. With time, the relationships became stronger and more frequent as the senior officials came in, organised things, set up systems and left. The expatriates from the Head Offices in Freetown would come once in a while to look at things (when it was considered very safe). They would come in again only to re-evaluate the situation when there is need for a resupply.

Second, the internationals compete against one another, as do the communities themselves, which weakens the quality of the relationships and their influence. From time to time, INGOs had problems between themselves because of this competition for limited resources in the international community. This sometimes confuses the recipients and creates an unhealthy environment within the communities they support. This sometimes spread amongst the local NGOs who received funds from these INGOs; the relationship gets so sour that they give out varied messages to the same communities on one type of intervention.

Third, local citizens do not know how to access the donors. Even though they are well aware of their existence and resources, INGO and NGO programmes and priorities are highly specialised and difficult to understand or access from the bottom. Each of the donors (multi- and bilateral), UN system and NGOs, had their purview of operation and they did so within such limits. Most of the external networks/linkages were undertaking specialised activities in interventions in which they knew they had capacity and manpower. For example, the health NGOs provide food and medicines whilst the government provides security and ensures that Native Administration re-emerges to administer the community and so on so forth. Others like World Vision and ActionAid in addition to rehabilitating schools and educational facilities in general also gave some agricultural support to the communities in which they intervened.

Finally, of course, as the war wound down so did donor involvement. 'Some of these INGOs are still collaborating with us in these activities' (coordinator of Bo Peace and Reconciliation Movement). After the war, there was a glut of INGOs in the cities which slowly and surely moved into the rural communities servicing them from the cities. This situation is changing as only a few can now be seen around, each handling a particular area of specialisation.

The consequence of the foregoing four factors is that after 2002 the main external actors most communities interacted with, were the development agencies and the

local councils that were newly reintroduced in 2004. It thus appears that the formal national and district structures of governance are much more influential for locals in accessing the donor and NGO networks than might have been imagined, given the tremendous financial advantage of the internationals. The communities simply do not have the direct contacts or knowledge to be able to recruit international finance for local priorities, as opposed to simply deciding whether and how to cooperate with programmes that have already been determined externally.

Thus communities expect to access assistance – even from donors or INGOs – through the state or their elected representatives. Nonetheless, as shown above, the role and functioning of the district councils is not secure and the relationship of national Members of Parliament to their communities now that there are district councillors also is unclear.

Most MPs do not go to their constituencies as decentralisation has made them uncertain of what they can deliver. In some cases the constituents do not even know them now and are desirous to remove them in the coming elections in 2012. For some, if they do go to their constituencies, they do so primarily to challenge the councillor on the implementation of development projects within the constituency/ward.

Most of the district councillors *do* go to their wards but also have the weakness of not calling ward committee meetings. The excuse they have is that the council/government is not providing cash for transportation or a sitting fee. But it also is true that the councils lack significant development funds at the moment. Only a few of the councillors grasp the role that they could play in mastering and interceding with the complex structure of international development assistance.

For the three tiers of centre, district and chiefdom/ward to work, the government must be ready to devolve still more functions to the council and also provide or transfer to them more of the funds that the donors send via the Ministries to the councils as this is the main stumbling block in the way of the councils.

The resulting quality of the chiefs' relations with their various elected representatives and central government officials is generally mediocre and 82 per cent have contact with no more than two of them. The institutional and financial instability of the councils and the chiefs, rather than the density of international assistance, seems to be the real barrier to responsive local governance.

## 7 Conclusions

The social contracts between society and the state, communities and their chiefs, and chiefs with the centre, have been re-established in Sierra Leone – especially in the rural areas. In good part this is due to the powerful negative lesson of what the alternative represents.

Life without the state is always 'nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbes 1939 [1651]). During the war Sierra Leoneans lost their human rights. They were killed at will, their properties looted in their face and they were sometimes even asked to carry their own property to the camps of the militia groups. Their wives and children

were raped in their presence and they did not have the right to question anything. If they did, the punishment was summary execution.

*Women suffered especially at the hands of the rebels... they were constantly raped and forced into marriage with the rebels and some of them had children with the rebels that are now a problem for them as they have been forced to be single parents. Their children face ridicule from their compatriots in school and in the neighbourhood.*

(Youth leader in Hangha town (near Kenema))

Life in the capital during the war was better, as people there had access to all the humanitarian agencies and supplies/aid that came to the country, and they were better protected as the government and the international community did not want the city to fall into the hands of the rebels or militia groups etc. But this did not mean that urban life was good.

Even the youths in the mining fields of Kono prefer state control and peace. But they do feel that their chiefs only hear them during difficult periods like the war. 'Sometimes we prefer statelessness because in this situation we are considered in any meeting as they would need our support' (Youth Chairman in Tombodu, Kamara Chiefdom, Kono District, 2011).

As the foregoing quote suggests, the recovered legitimacy and effectiveness of Sierra Leone's government structures is not just a product of negative learning. It also is due to a far-reaching set of reforms to the key institutions of order in the country – the Native Administration, the SL Army, the SL Police and the magistrates courts, and the district councils.

However, there are tensions that will need to be addressed:

- (i) SS Reform of the SLP is insecure and needs to be reinforced.<sup>22</sup> [On the other hand, the reforms of the SL Army have been reinforced by its being selected for peacekeeping missions elsewhere in Africa, which brings it status and extra income while also exposing it to still more SSR ideals.]
- (ii) Chieftaincy seems to be an institution in transition. Is it going to persist only as a source of moral leadership, unifying the communities it serves? Or is it going to undergo changes that would make it more compatible with the universalist and democratic ethos that has grown in Sierra Leone from the war? And might those changes lead to its being given more significant roles again?
- (iii) The tension between the chiefs and the district councils seems a potential source of weakened legitimacy. And to this is added the still further uncertainty of the re-establishment of District Officers as an instrument of the centre against independent forces of decentralisation. Since there seems to be partisan advantage in the DO development, the instabilities here are potentially great.
- (iv) The various reforms that have come in the wake of the civil war are incomplete and the institutional boundaries of the newly reconstructed multilayered governance system are unclear. The result is that most of the component parts

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22 Note: The SLP too have started going for international peace keeping missions. But this notwithstanding still need to have the respect and confidence from the citizens in SL.

– chiefs, district councils, NA and magistrates' courts, SL and NA police, are not functioning as well as they might. Not enough attention has been paid to how governance at the 'periphery' is to be conducted.

Nonetheless, it is clear that governance does not disappear when the state collapses. Its structures remain hidden and in retreat, but ready to sprout into existence again. This is true for all parts of government, but it is especially true for the structures of local and rural governance. The consequence is that a post-conflict state has much more need for decentralisation – as well as possibilities for achieving it.

Multilayered, networked governance involving international actors also is a reality but it is much less of a threat to vital states than might have been imagined.

- (i) Through intra-donor competition and the respect internationals have for sovereignty, states have influence over what donors do, that is much greater than the imbalance in resources would suggest.
- (ii) Since donors most often take on local agents of the state as a part of their project implementation, citizens are unaware of the true depth of donor influence and give legitimacy to the state for donor presence.
- (iii) Citizens do not know how to access donor resources; generally they do so through the state.

## Annex 1: Map of the Districts of Sierra Leone



Source: Wikipedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_Sierra\\_Leone](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Sierra_Leone) (accessed 21 September 2011)

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# Security in an Africa of Networked, Multilevel Governance

## A Research Councils of the UK Global Uncertainties Fellowship

***This research programme*** centres on how the various institutions responsible for the production of security and the management of conflict in Sub-Saharan African societies do, could and should evolve in response to the presence of violent conflict or criminality. The programme is built on the observation that all governance (especially in Africa) is multileveled and networked – from the village to the international organisation, and well beyond what is specified in formal government structures. Thus the focus is not only on the ways in which key conflict-management institutions evolve themselves but also on the changing ways in which the networks in which they are embedded actually operate.

***The programme researchers*** are: David K. Leonard (director) together with Jeremy Allouche, Niagale Bagayoko-Penone, Peter Houtzager, Sidibe Kalilou, Freida M'Cormack, Ferdinand Mugumo Mushi, Thierry Mayamba Nlandu, Mohamed Samantar, Anna Schmidt, James Vincent, and Patrick Zadi Zadi.

***Countries*** in which field research has been or will be conducted are: Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland).

***The objective*** of the research is the identification of institutional strategies for recovering the multiple aspects of human security in countries that have been fractured by violent conflict.

***Key questions*** the programme seeks to answer are:

- *How do conflict management institutions evolve under the stress of prolonged violent conflict and how can they best contribute to the recovery of human security?* Institutions under consideration include elections, elected and traditional local government, local courts, the police, and the armed services.
- *What are the networks of relationships within and between states, communities, NGOs, international organisations, and international donors for the management and resolution of intrastate conflicts and how might their effectiveness be improved?*

**Completed research papers** under the **Multilevel Governance in Africa programme** are:

Bachmann (2011) *The African Standby Force: External Support to an 'African Solution to African Problems'?*, IDS Research Report 67, Brighton: IDS

Bagayoko-Penone (2010) *Multi-level Governance and Security: The Security Sector Reform Process in the Central African Republic*, IDS Working Paper 351, Brighton: IDS

Bagayoko-Penone (2010) *Security Systems in Francophone Africa*, IDS Research Report 64, Brighton: IDS

Bagayoko-Penone (ed.) (November 2009) 'Promoting Peace and Democracy through Security Sector Reform', *Governance Insight* 70

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Institute of Development Studies  
Brighton BN1 9RE UK

T +44 (0) 1273 606261

F +44 (0) 1273 621202

E [ids@ids.ac.uk](mailto:ids@ids.ac.uk)

[www.ids.ac.uk](http://www.ids.ac.uk)